

ORAL HISTORY TRANSCRIPT

General Anthony C. Zinni

U.S. Marine Corps (Retired)



Dr. Fred H. Allison

Interviewer

HISTORY DIVISION

U.S Marine Corps

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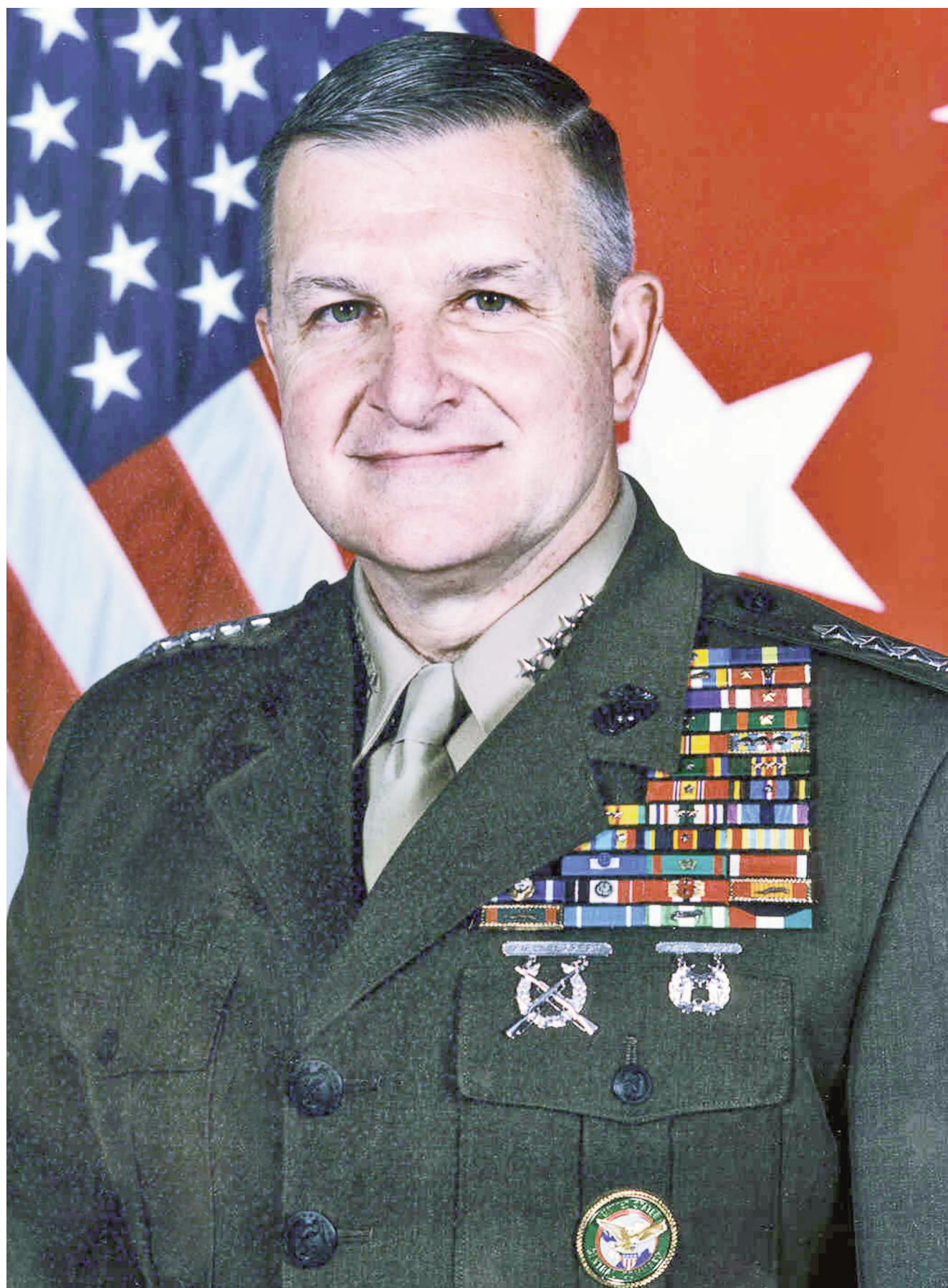


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Foreword

This volume is the transcribed oral history of General Anthony C. Zinni, U.S. Marine Corps (Retired). It is the result of a recorded 11-session interview, conducted in Quantico, Virginia, by Dr. Fred H. Allison and Dr. Gordon Rudd, who participated in one session, on behalf of the Marine Corps Oral History Program. This transcript is the work of many individuals, most importantly General Zinni himself who committed many hours of his time to sit for the interviews and more hours to review and emend the transcript. Thanks also to Colonel John Moffett, General Zinni's chief of staff while I MEF commander and deputy Central Command. Dr. Allison reviewed and edited the transcript. XXXXX developed the index. William S. Hill of the Editing & Design Branch designed the pages for binding.

As one facet of the Marine Corps historical collection effort, the program obtains primary source material to augment other official documentary records. Oral history is essentially spoken history—the oral recall of eyewitness impressions and observations—accurately recorded in the course of an interview conducted by a historian employing historical methodology. The final product is a bound transcript like this one, containing historically valuable personal narratives relating to noteworthy professional experiences and observations of distinguished Marines.

While General Zinni has reviewed and made minor amendments to the transcript, the reader is asked to bear in mind that he or she is reading a transcript of the spoken rather than the written word. General Zinni has placed no restriction on the use of this transcript. Accordingly, it may be read by anyone upon presentation of appropriate credentials.

Copies of this transcript are archived in the Marine Corps Oral History Collection at the Historical Division, Marine Corps University, Quantico, Virginia, the Naval Institute, Annapolis, Maryland, and the Naval Historical Center at the Washington Navy Yard, DC.

Dr. Charles P. Neimeyer
Director of Marine Corps History
Marine Corps University

GENERAL ANTHONY C. ZINNI, USMC

BIOGRAPHY

General Anthony C. Zinni was the former commander in chief, United States Central Command, MacDill Air Force Base, Florida.

General Zinni was commissioned a second lieutenant in 1965 upon graduation from Villanova University. After completion of The Basic School, he was assigned to the 2d Marine Division, where he served as a platoon commander, company executive officer, and company commander in 1st Battalion, 6th Marines. He also served as a company commander in the 1st Infantry Training Regiment during this tour.

In 1967, General Zinni was assigned as an infantry battalion advisor to the Vietnamese Marine Corps. Following Vietnam, he was ordered to The Basic School where he served as a tactics instructor, platoon commander, and company executive officer. In 1970, he returned to Vietnam as a company commander in 1st Battalion, 5th Marines, where he was wounded, evacuated, and subsequently assigned to the 3d Force Service Regiment on Okinawa. There he served as a company commander and guard officer. General Zinni returned to the 2d Marine Division in 1971, where he served as a company commander in the 1st Battalion, 8th Marines, aide to the commanding general, and officer in charge of the Infantry Training Center. In 1974, he was assigned to Headquarters Marine Corps, where he was assigned as the retention and release officer and plans officer in the Officer Augmentation Branch of the Manpower Department.

General Zinni again served in the 2d Marine Division in 1978, as the operations officer of the 3d Battalion, 2d Marines, executive officer of the 1st Battalion, 8th Marines, and commanding officer of the 2d Battalion, 8th Marines. In 1981, he was assigned as an operations and tactics instructor at the Marine Corps Command and Staff College at Quantico, Virginia. He was next assigned to the Operations Division at Headquarters Marine Corps, where he served as the head of the Special Operations and Terrorism Counteraction Section and as the head, Marine Air-Ground Task Force Concepts and Capabilities Branch. During 1986, he was selected as a fellow on the Chief of Naval Operations Strategic Studies Group. From 1987 to 1989, General Zinni served on Okinawa as the regimental commander of the 9th Marines and the commanding officer of the 31st Marine Expeditionary Unit, which was twice deployed to the Philippines to conduct emergency security operations and disaster relief operations. Upon his return to the United States, he was assigned as the chief of staff of the Marine Air-Ground Training and Education Center at Quantico.

His initial general officer assignment was as the deputy director of operations at the U.S. European Command. In 1991, he served as the chief of staff and deputy commanding general of the Combined Task Force Provide Comfort during the Kurdish relief effort in Turkey and Iraq. He also served as the military coordinator for Operation Provide Hope, the relief effort for the former Soviet Union. During 1992-1993, he served as the director for operations for the Unified Task Force Somalia for Operation Restore Hope. Also in 1993, he served as the assistant to the U.S. special envoy to Somalia during Operation Continue Hope. General Zinni was assigned as

the deputy commanding general, U.S. Marine Corps Combat Development Command, Quantico, Virginia, from 1992 to 1994.

From 1994 to 1996, he served as the commanding general, I Marine Expeditionary Force. During early 1995, General Zinni served as commander of the Combined Task Force for Operation United Shield, protecting the withdrawal of UN forces from Somalia.

From September 1996 until August 1997, General Zinni served as the deputy commander in chief, United States Central Command. From August 1997 until August 2000, he served as commander in chief, United States Central Command. He retired from active service in September 2000.

He attended The Basic School, Army Special Warfare School, Amphibious Warfare School, Marine Corps Command and Staff College, and the National War College. He holds a bachelor's degree in economics, a master of arts degree in international relations, and a master of arts degree in management and supervision.

General Zinni's decorations include: the Defense Distinguished Service Medal; the Defense Superior Service Medal with two oak leaf clusters; the Bronze Star Medal with Combat "V" and gold star in lieu of a second award; the Purple Heart; the Meritorious Service Medal with gold star in lieu of a second award; the Navy Commendation Medal with Combat "V" and gold star in lieu of a second award; Navy Achievement Medal with gold star in lieu of a second award; the Combat Action Ribbon; the Vietnamese Honor Medal; the French National Order of Merit; and the Order of Merit of the Italian Republic.

UNITED STATES MARINE CORPS HISTORY DIVISION
Oral History Interview

Interviewee: General Anthony C. Zinni
Date: 5 February 2007
Length: 1:37:40
Interviewer: Dr. Fred H. Allison

SESSION I

Allison: This is Fred Allison conducting the first session of an oral history interview with General Anthony Zinni. Today's date is 5 February 2007. And also participating is Deputy Director of the History Division, Dick Camp, USMC, retired.

Good morning, General Zinni. Thanks for coming up, and thanks for doing the interview. A place to start General is at the beginning. When and where were you born?

Zinni: I was born in a hospital in Bryn Mawr, Pennsylvania. Grew up in Conshohocken, Pennsylvania, which is a suburb of Philadelphia. My parents both were immigrants to the United States. My father was a teenager, my mother three or four years old. My grandfathers came over at the turn of the 20th century, early on, established themselves with jobs and sent for their families. My parents were with their families, each of them. The grandmothers that came over, they set up—in the case of my mother's family, in a working class neighborhood in south Philadelphia. Basically they were all garment workers and tailors. My father's family was basically farmers. When they came over, they worked in the mills and factories in Conshohocken a mill town outside of Philadelphia; they also did landscaping work, and that sort of thing. They were blue-collar, hard working, people; big extended Italian family. I grew up mainly in Conshohocken and spent a lot time with mother's side of the family in south Philadelphia. I'm a product of Catholic education: grade school, high school,

Villanova University. Not a remarkable childhood. It was a working class neighborhood that I grew up in. Basically, Irish, Italian, Polish, and some Mayflower Americans that had been there for a long period of time. Very close neighborhood, the families were all close, and again, it wasn't anything extraordinary. I was the last of four children, by far the youngest. My parents were in their upper 40s when I was born. I was the only child that my father could afford to send to college. He could afford the tuition, but I worked my way through college. I wasn't a resident. I commuted everyday for four years. Majored in business, bachelor of science degree in economics. I thought when I began I would find some sort of niche in the business world. But on the first day on campus, I tried to figure out what college was all about, since I had no background or understanding. Somebody told me I had to join the military, which wasn't true. But I didn't know, so I wandered around the campus trying to figure out how you do that. Somebody said there was a Naval ROTC, but I didn't know what that was.

Allison: You were a freshman you said?

Zinni: Yes, freshman, just 18 years old. Just turned 18. This was 1961, and I found two Marine captains in dress blue standing at the cafeteria next to a poster, and I went up and said, "I'm ready to join." So they asked me what I was going to join. I said, "I don't know." They signed me up for PLC [Platoon Leaders Class] program.

Allison: Your parents, or your family were from Abruzzo, Italy? Have you ever visited there?

Zinni: I have. It's a very rugged, mountainous area. It's about the center of the peninsula over toward the Adriatic side. It's kind of due east of Rome. It's still, to this day very rugged; national parks up there, still bears and wolves, and mountainous terrain. It's a

tough place. There were a lot of immigrants from southern Italy, and then from that region of Abruzzo because it was hard to make a living up there. It was hard; the ground isn't that arable. So many immigrants from the central and southern Italy came to the United States. Especially in the wave of large Italian immigrations at the beginning of the twentieth century. They were amongst those, obviously, that came here for a better life.

Camp: Did your family speak Italian?

Zinni: We did when my grandparents were alive. When my grandparents passed away, we didn't so much. My father, in 1918, he came in about 1910, was drafted into the Army for World War I, and he went with the American Expeditionary Force to France. They eventually put him in Army aviation. So he was in a squadron in France, and when he came back, he became a citizen. To be a citizen of the United States and to serve his new country meant a great deal to him. When my grandparents died, he really wanted us to speak English. We spoke English most of the time, other than when we're talking to our grandparents or some of the extended family. Especially those who were from Italy. After that, it was all English.

Camp: Did he talk about the war? His experiences in war?

Zinni: Yes, he talked about the war. Amazingly enough, he took a camera. He took photographs, a lot of photographs of the war. I have an album full of pictures of SPADs and Curtiss aircraft and all the things that they maintained and flew. Even in those days, even the enlisted could go up and get some pictures.

Allison: It would be interesting to see those.

Zinni: He had a strong sense of patriotism for our country. My brother was drafted for the

Korean War and was in the 25th Infantry Division in Korea. I had cousins in World War II, one with the 84th Division at the Battle of Bulge. He was wounded. The other was a communicator on a B-24 that was shot up over the Pacific. So, we had virtually all of the males in my family serving in the military.

Allison: That's what got you orientated that way?

Zinni: You know, I think in my neighborhood and in the family because in those days World War I and World War II and Korea, everybody had served. It was understood that you did it. I thought clearly that if I didn't end up joining the Marine Corps while in college, I would have to do my time in service to my country. It was kind of a sense of that's what you do. It was viewed as a rite of passage. I remember everybody in my neighborhood really felt that you had to go into the military. It was part of becoming a man. You served the in military. My one brother-in-law was in the Air Force. Another brother-in-law was a Marine. It was just what everybody did. It was expected and it was kind a point of pride. It was kind of like a passage to manhood.

Allison: Why the Marine Corps?

Zinni: Well, to me, I didn't really think about it. My brother-in-law had been a Marine, married to my sister who was closest to me in age. He had been in the Marine Corps, and he talked a lot about the Marine Corps. So, I was pretty savvy on all of the services because I had relatives virtually in every service. They talked about it. Of course, they'd all been through war. So, when you're a kid you're hearing all of these stories and everything, whether it was World War II or World War I or Korea, and the sense that you're going to have to do that too is assumed. But, the Marine Corps always impressed me as being an elite force and really challenging. I thought of it as a

way to challenge yourself and a way to be part of something that's really unique. But, you know, I heard positive stories about all of the services. So, it wasn't just the Marine Corps. All of the relatives I had that were in any of the services were really proud of their service.

Allison: So, you had two brothers and a sister?

Zinni: I had one brother and two sisters. My brother was in the Army, one brother-in-law in the Air Force, and another brother-in-law in the Marine Corps. My father was in the Army. I had cousins in the Army Air Corps in World War II and in the Army infantry.

Allison: Did your brother get through Korea all right?

Zinni: Yes. He was artillery. He originally went into the Army when he was drafted and was made an MP. He was a really big guy. He had played professional baseball. Then, there was a unit in Korea that was decimated in a battle and they were trying to reconstitute the artillery unit. He'd had a year of school, studying to be a draftsman. He had some math background. They were looking for anybody with anything like that. So, they brought him over and he was in the fire direction center of the artillery battalion.

Allison: Timing was everything in Korea.

Zinni: Oh, yes.

Allison: Was there any interest in politics in the family?

Zinni: Yes, very much so. My father was a Republican; my mother was Democrat, and I mean really into it. I think my father spent a lot of time working on what is called the Main Line of Philadelphia. It's all very wealthy. It used to be big estates. There was a lot of old money, very wealthy. He worked up there as a landscaper and eventually

became a chauffeur and worked for a family up there that was very conservative. I think that shaped his politics. He was always a strong Republican. He really loved Eisenhower and the Republicans. Now, my mother's side of the family was all union, the clothing workers' union. I had relatives in the Amalgamated Clothing Workers Union, so they were heavily Democrat. So, election time around my house was interesting.

Allison: So, you got both sides of it growing up?

Zinni: Yes, I got both sides of it. And, they were very politically savvy and that kind of washed over to us kids. We understood the politics pretty well. When I was in high school, I ended up working for the Kennedy Campaign. I met Jack Kennedy.

Allison: Oh, you did?

Zinni: Yes. He came to the area we were in. You know, when you're a high school kid you work basically handing out pamphlets and leaflets. I don't think that was a political leaning on my part. I just liked Kennedy. He was young. He was vibrant. He had served in World War II on the PT boats. Meeting him was an exciting time. So, in the 1960 election I worked in his campaign.

He made an impression on me and his death really was pretty close. But, you know, in my time, I voted Democrat/Republican/Independent. I've been registered as part of everything.

Allison: What did you do in high school?

Zinni: Not much because I had started out—where we lived was kind of between two townships. When I first went to school, I went in the first couple of grades to a public elementary school. I had to be bussed. It was a long way away. So, when my parish

opened up a grade school, I transferred to that. But, that was also pretty far. I had to walk to school, which was a considerable distance. The high school was even further. It was like two or three miles, and I walked it every day there and back.

Allison: Up hill, both ways. [*In jest*]

Zinni: Up, both ways, in the snow [*laughter*]. But, you know, like everything else, when you start walking, you meet up with other students. You meet everybody along the way and you kind of make your way up there. But it was not a big Catholic school. It was small; it didn't have a lot of activities, but academically, very, very good. The nuns were excellent teachers. I found later in life that a lot of things we learned in high school were carrying over to college and everything else pretty well.

Allison: You went to Saint Mathews, right?

Zinni: Saint Mathews, yes, which no longer exists. There were limited sports opportunities. I played Babe Ruth baseball, played basketball one year in high school. But, in high school I worked. I worked after hours. I was a stock boy and salesman in a store.

Allison: Anthony's . . .

Zinni: Anthony's Men's Store. Yes. And I did other things.

Allison: What kind of work?

Zinni: I did odd jobs here and there. I cut grass and other things.

Allison: What did you like to do for fun as you're growing up as a boy and playing?

Zinni: There were the sports. We always played sandlot sports, baseball, and football and basketball. We had a youth center in our town and we'd go over there in the evenings and play sports. Babe Ruth League and Little League were very strong in the town. So, you would always play those and played high school sports. As a matter of fact, the

nonhigh school sports tended to be more intense than the high school sports, with the exception to football. But, I wasn't a big kid or anything. I wasn't particularly athletic or skilled in any way. So, I had limited abilities. But, I enjoyed the sports. I really like playing. But, again, I was working so I didn't have a lot of time to do all of that. I read a lot. My father was a big believer in education and reading. He made sure we had every magazine that ever came out. We had *Time*, *Newsweek*, *U.S. News and World Report*. We must have had 30 or 40 magazines and newspapers and everything else. There were a lot of books. So, I liked to read. He believed in it and encouraged us to read and made sure we had all of the stuff to do it. Those were my interests basically. Again, work consumed me most.

Allison: How big of an influence was religion? I'm getting the impression that it was a big part of the family activity.

Zinni: Yes, we certainly were observant Catholics. We went to church every Sunday. We certainly were close to the church. The church was an important part of our life. It was an important part of community. Again, this is a big extended Italian community. In our community, our parish was a very close parish. So, we obviously did a lot through the church and all. From grade school to high school to college, I was in a Catholic institution the whole way.

Allison: What about friends?

Zinni: Friends basically ran the gamut. I mean I had friends from all over the neighborhood. You had friends through the sports connections sometimes. You had friends through academic things you did. When I was in high school, I was on the debating team, I was on the chess team. You meet people through that. Then, my immediate

neighborhood, you have friends that you grow up with and hang out with, cousins that were very close, and again because the family was very close. There were lots of cousins. Some of them I'm not sure were actually blood relatives, but we called them cousins.

Allison: Do you stay in touch with any of them now?

Zinni: Yes, many of them. My brother passed away. My sisters and sister-in-law and all of their families are still up in the Philadelphia area. So, I go back often and see a lot of them. I still connect with some of my high school friends and college friends in the area, because Villanova was not far from Conshohocken, only about seven miles.

Allison: Do you think being the youngest in the family—I mean how did that affect you? You said you were way younger than your nearest sibling.

Zinni: My brother, who was the oldest, was 16 years older. My parents got married a little later in life. So, I came along when my parents were in their mid-to-late 40s. I think by the time I came along, there were a lot of advantages. Like I say, my father could afford to send me to college. Unfortunately, my brother and sisters didn't have that opportunity. My brother and sisters felt that I was spoiled, and I probably was.

Allison: That's kind of interesting. You know, I've interviewed a couple of other generals that were the youngest. I was just wondering, you know, sometimes they make a big deal of placement. I've always heard that the oldest son tended to be more of a leader.

Zinni: My brother, who was the oldest, was kind of looked up to as the leader. Especially as my parents got older, he was kind of looked up to as the person in the family who got things done. I think when you are the youngest everybody looks after you. I had cousins that were much older than me and aunt and uncles. They're all like your

parents. So, you're being raised by everybody. I mean, my sisters who were older, so you're being raised by an entire family and extended family.

Allison: So, it's kind of a special project or something.

Zinni: Yes. Everybody looks out for you. You might think in many ways, you're not the first one. You're tended to and cared for and as a result spoiled much more than anyone else.

Allison: That can be good and bad.

Zinni: Yes. Nothing goes on that your parents don't know about.

Allison: How about your address, 611 West Elm Street? Was this sort of the classic American address that sounds like hometown America?

Zinni: It pretty much was. I mean that the only difference would have been that it was a mill town. There were a lot of factories there. There was Alan Wood Steel Company. It was a large steel mill. There was all sorts of heavy industry around there. Along the river running into Philadelphia were all of the mill towns. They all have Indian names. So, you had these sort of ethnic communities, blue collar communities around there, where everybody had jobs in the mills there and working there. Then, when the heavy industry collapsed, which was really after I left, it kind of went through a short period of depression. For some reason now, it's become yuppie, upscale community. Now, all the old homes, these were well-built old homes, they're historical in many cases. They've all been renovated. Now, these are wonderful, little suburban communities. The rehab had a lot of money put in it, federal funds and others. They've really developed. There're all sorts of dot.com businesses and others going up.

Allison: These were brick homes or . . .

Zinni: Oh, yes. Brick and block and very substantial. It was what you would see in the old sort of quality and workmanship in the houses that you don't have today. They were all built in the turn of the twentieth century. They were sturdily built, nice homes.

Allison: You sort of paint a picture of growing up in the '50s with that classics . . . well, we think of the 1950s. Would you say that was sort of the childhood you had?

Zinni: Yes, I think pretty much. My mother worked outside the home though. One of the skills she had is she made handmade buttonholes, which were a rarity and only top of the line clothes. The companies she worked for used to make coats for the Naval Academy. One of the requirements was that they had to be hand stitched buttonholes and all of that couldn't be machine made. So, it was a specialty that she had. Her side of my family were all tailors in the garment industry. So, she worked. But, again, when you have really big families and a lot of people, it isn't like there's nobody around your home. There are always plenty of people around and lots to do with the family. I think the neighborhoods were, you know when you look back on it, the family values were very strong. Not to say life was easy back there. Everybody was working hard jobs in the mills. The neighborhoods tended to be pretty tough. It was a mill town. Every street corner had a bar or a tap room.

Allison: But, there weren't gangs like in the inner cities and crime?

Zinni: No, not at all. You would feel safe walking around at night and that kind of thing.

Allison: Did your family take a lot of pride in being Italians? Did they flaunt that?

Zinni: No, there was certainly pride and we had our festivals and all of the Italians' traditions and everything else. But, my father was very much into being American. That's what he instilled in us, this is your country. We came here because this is a great

opportunity. This is your land and you connect yourself to it. Like I said, being made a citizen and the opportunity to serve his country really affected him when he was young. He was well aware, since he came over here as a teenager, what life was like and how hard it was back there. So, to come to this life and see the opportunities impressed him. We would look back at those now and say well those opportunities didn't seem that great, you know, working mills and all that stuff. But, they certainly were great to you then. You had the resources to raise a nice family, live in a decent home, and enjoy the benefits here like the freedoms and everything else. I think that was very important to the family. I think they very quickly adapted to being American. When my grandparents were alive, it was a lot more of the Italian tradition. Then, I think after they passed away, it was not so much. In the course of about three generations, you almost become totally American.

Allison: Looking back, who from your family or your community, school, church . . . can you recognize individuals that were particularly influential as a mentor or role model?

Zinni: Well, I think growing up my brother, since he was 16 years older, was a tremendous influence on me and a role model and a hero. I think in the schools, the good sisters that we had. You don't appreciate the nuns until you leave them. Drill instructors have nothing on the nuns. They were completely dedicated. Their lives were given to make you a better student and make you develop. So, the nuns were a tremendous influence in growing up. In college there were a number of professors and teachers. As a matter of fact, a couple of priests that had been chaplains. One was a chaplain in 82d Airborne in World War II, and another was a chaplain in Korea with an Army unit. Since I was in PLCs and all, I really related to them. They were not only good teachers

and mentors and all, but they had the military experience too, in both cases with units in combat. So, that had a positive effect.

Allison: Did I see in the record that you were in the orchestra?

Zinni: Yes. When I was in grade school, way back in the beginning of school. One of the things you did, was you played an instrument. There were a lot of musicians in my family that either did it full time or part time. So, when I went to grade school at six years old, I was expected to pick an instrument and play. I picked the clarinet and saxophone, and I started playing. I took lessons all the way through. Then, in high school I was in the orchestra. I carried through for about 12 years. Everybody did it. You were either in a rock and roll band or playing in an orchestra. Everybody played music. That was the kind of thing you did, American Band Stand.

Allison: That's when rock and roll was first started. Did you have any favorite bands or anything?

Zinni: In my neighborhood there were a lot rock and roll stars. You know, Bobby Rydell and Frankie Avalon, they all grew up either in the neighborhood or nearby in Philadelphia. Of course, that's where American Band Stand was. The music went everywhere, from classical to jazz. I mean I had cousins who were in jazz bands or really into jazz. I was for a long period of time. Then, rock and roll. So, there were all types of music. In my grandmother's neighborhood is where Mario Lanza and Julius LaRosa grew up. They were big hits. That was more classical and opera. I mean, I'd go to the opera or go to a rock and roll place or to a jazz place. There were all kinds of music. Music was a big part of everybody's life.

Allison: Then going to Villanova, was that sort of a predetermined thing or did you pick it from

other choices?

Zinni: Well, when I realized that I was going to go to college and I mean not many kids in my high school did, the vast majority of kids in the neighborhood either public school or Catholic school kind of went into jobs in the mills. Those of us who were going to go to college, we had to fill out our wish list. My top choice was Villanova really because of the proximity. I had to commute to school.

Allison: You had no desire to get away from home or anything like that?

Zinni: I couldn't afford it. I was going to have to work. So, I couldn't afford living away. So, I would have to either commute into Philadelphia or Villanova, which was about seven miles away across the river. It was a much different neighborhood than mine. It was on the Main Line. So, I put Villanova as the first choice. Then, I put Penn and couple of other Philadelphia schools, but the nuns said, "Villanova." So, they wanted me in a Catholic college.

Allison: Yes, the University of Pennsylvania is a pretty liberal school.

Zinni: Well, it's just that they want you to continue that kind of education. But, in those days it was a lot different. I mean religion was a big part of it. Of course, if you were Catholic you had to take the religion courses there. So, that's the only one I really applied to and I was accepted.

Allison: You decided to major in business/economics?

Zinni: Yes, you know it really wasn't in my heart. I really would have rather done history or liberal arts, but, I kind of felt that I had to have a hard skill. I mean, I had to have a skill that I could use. In my neighborhood, you either go to work in the mills or you go to work at some sort of business in some sort of capacity. I wasn't certain how. I mean,

I didn't have anything in my mind. But, I really felt that I had to do business. I liked some of the elective courses where I took history and logic and other things. Not that anybody pushed me into anything. I just felt that that was what it had to be.

Allison: Did you have a favorite period of history that you were interested in?

Zinni: I liked all of history. I like logic. We had classes in logic and philosophy. I liked those, too. If I look back on it now, I would much rather of chosen a more broad liberal arts education. I think I would have enjoyed that much more. Not that I didn't enjoy the business school. There were really good instructors and it was a good school. Right now, that business school is ranked as one of the top business schools in the country. It was fine for what it taught. I thought these were useful skills that I would need. Of course, as I moved along and it became clear to me about the Marine Corps, I thought, "At least I have three years where I don't have to get into that."

Allison: How good of a student were you, sir?

Zinni: "C". Gentlemanly *[laughter]*.

Allison: Nothing wrong with that.

Zinni: Yes, I think that actually was because I didn't have that kind of burning interest in what I was studying. I mean it was fine, but it wasn't that burning interest. I was working and doing other things. I was trying to get through. So, I maintained that C. I was probably a C+ student overall.

Allison: Did you join any fraternities? Did they have fraternities there?

Zinni: They did. I just didn't have time. I mean the only thing I did was some intramural sports there, because obviously like I say three classes during the day and off to work. You'd have a break in between classes. So, you had to stay up there. So, I played some

sports just to stay in shape and have something to do while I was up there. But, basically, I got there at the beginning of the first class and left at the end of the last class. I usually had to hitchhike to get back and forth.

Allison: No car.

Zinni: Right.

Allison: The whole four years?

Zinni: The whole four years. There was no public transportation going out there.

Allison: But, it was easy to hitchhike.

Zinni: Yes. What we were called were “dayhops,” the students who didn’t live on campus. Many of us in the area that were dayhops became pretty good friends. We did things together and stayed connected in the summers. Obviously two summers you have to go away to PLC at Quantico.

Allison: What’d you think of that first summer at PLC, that was summer 1962?

Zinni: I didn’t know what to expect and I had no idea what it was all about.

Allison: They didn’t sit down and fully explain it?

Zinni: Not at all. As a matter of fact, when the orders came to go, I wasn’t even sure what this was all about. I somehow got a brochure on Quantico, but it was like something the base puts out. There’s a golf course and all this other information on base activities.

Allison: You didn’t bring your golf clubs did you?

Zinni: No, I didn’t bring my golf clubs, but I mean I brought my baseball glove and all of this stuff, because, it showed troops playing ball. It was like the base brochure. So, coming down there and driving out to Camp Upshur was a shock. It was like going off the edge of the earth somewhere.

Allison: Did you take the train down?

Zinni: I took the train down and got off at the old train station at Quantico-town. We got out there. There were a bunch of gunnies yelling at us. That was something I couldn't figure it out. Why were they angry? So, you know, junior PLCs was a real awakening. It was very different. It was a hard adjustment. I tended to be, I wouldn't say a wise guy, but I questioned everything, which wasn't good. I ended up graduating Junior PLCs on probation.

Allison: Was it tough physically and mentally?

Zinni: It wasn't so tough physically. I think I was surprised by the amount of running. That was different. But, you know, from playing a lot of sports, I worked out a lot. So, I was in pretty good shape. The only physical part was the running that was unusual. I did a lot more running after that getting ready for the second PLC. I did a lot more running. I was running five to seven miles a day getting ready to come down here. I was lifting weights. I was in much better shape for the Marine Corps the second time.

But, the first time was okay. It wasn't that big of a problem. I think the hardest adjustment was sort of the military environment. You wouldn't expect to come in with that kind of discipline but I had the nuns and Catholic school. The normal sort of mental stress that you're put under, well, we had to deal with the nuns and all. But, I think sort of adapting to the military way of doing things was tough. You get an order and you do it. I would ask why we were doing this. That's not what you want to do. So, that part was the toughest adjustment. After the first summer, I really began to understand more about the Marine Corps. I now was subscribing to the *Gazette* and I was reading more about the Marine Corps. Even the NROTC program, which had

Marine options on campus, even though I was a PLC, they would want me to come over and talk to the people who were going down for the first time on how to prepare. So, by the time the second summer came, I was much more into it and understood it and knew how to prepare for it. So, it was a lot different.

Allison: Did it help you through school?

Zinni: I think it makes you more mature. I think that the whole process of coming down to Quantico and going through that makes you grow a little bit in terms of your maturity. I didn't find what other kids were doing in college had much interest to me. I wasn't interested in the frat parties and all the other kinds of stuff. I just think it makes you grow. But, I would say added to that was the fact that I wasn't living on campus. I was working. It was a different lifestyle then the majority of students.

Allison: What about training? I mean you talk about physically training. Did you do any sort of tactical infantry stuff?

Zinni: Yes. Basic tactics and weapons. We joined the Marine Corps Association my Junior PLC summer and so you're getting the *Gazette* and reading about things like that.

Allison: Right.

Zinni: There was a lot about Vietnam in there and insurgencies and President Kennedy was talking about confronting communist insurgencies. So, there were a lot of writings about that. I would find a lot of things. I did some papers in school on that because it fascinated me.

Allison: Okay. You developed an interest in that right away?

Zinni: Yes, because President Kennedy was saying, "This is how we're going to confront Communism." We wanted the military to be oriented toward countering insurgencies

and all of that. A lot was being written and said about that even outside the normal military sources. So, I really followed that pretty closely.

Allison: Did you have any billets? Do you remember any billets at all?

Zinni: Yes, I had a squad leader and platoon sergeant billet.

Allison: Do you remember any of your instructors at all?

Zinni: My platoon sergeant was named Malico and the lieutenant was Pellegrino.

Allison: Any other students that you kept up with in the Marine Corps that moved on up through the ranks?

Zinni: There were a number there. Some got out and some stayed in. In Junior PLCs, there were no African-Americans, but in Senior PLCs we had one in my platoon who later went on to be assistant secretary to the Navy. He was coming through as a reservist. But, he was the assistant secretary to the Navy for Manpower or something like that. But, again, everybody seemed to bond. I think the great experience was just being exposed to whole new worlds, new people, and everybody in the same boat.

Allison: All right, anything else on the PLCs?

Zinni: No. No. It was a great program. I liked it. The nice thing about it was that I didn't have the time in school to go through an ROTC program or anything like that. It would have been hard. This made it great because I'd go away in the summers. You actually got paid. Then, of course, once you got commissioned you had four years longevity for pay purposes so you're making more than the other lieutenants.

Camp: I know it, gosh darn it *[laughter]*.

Allison: And then when you graduate, you became a second lieutenant.

Zinni: The first thing I did was bought my parents a color TV. I did it with my first paycheck

in the Marine Corps.

Allison: Really? You mean you could afford it after buying your uniforms?

Zinni: Well, I was paying monthly for my uniforms and for my car. Because then, I bought a car when I graduated and came down here to Quantico. But, I bought a TV for them at the time.

Allison: What kind of car did you buy?

Zinni: I bought a Chevy Caprice, a brand new 1965 model. And, I bought it from a local car dealer who sold to my family, so I got a good deal.

Allison: Okay. So, after you graduate from Villanova, you're a second lieutenant, you come down to The Basic School then.

Zinni: We came to Basic School in June 1965. I came down a couple of weeks ahead of time. I don't know why we were ordered down early but it gave us a chance to get in shape and get oriented.

Allison: Now you're starting to like it.

Zinni: I'm starting to really like it.

Allison: When did it first become apparent to you that you really liked that?

Zinni: Well, I think it was through Junior PLC, the camaraderie, the physical challenges, the sense that you're doing something really important, just being exposed to all sorts of things that really had a lot of appeal. My platoon commander at Basic School, then 1st Lieutenant Arnold Whittelsey, was a great guy. He was really a great leader. He told us that "You're officers now." He was really treating us like officers. He said, "You're expected to run yourself in this platoon." He said, "I step in when you demonstrate that you can't run yourselves." He did a lot of mentoring and counseling. There were

great instructors at the Basic School. They were people you really looked up to. Now, you're seeing these officers that are really role models for you. Then, while in Basic School, the Marines landed in Santo Domingo. The Marines landed in July in Vietnam. Suddenly, everything is changing. I mean, while we're in Basic School, all of these things are happening. Marines are all over the place. They're landing and fighting. This whole idea that now the Marines are at war again. You see a change from the beginning of my Basic School class because this stuff happens not long after we get there. Then, in the middle just the whole atmosphere changed to one of much more seriousness. Now, we didn't know how long it was going to last. [Robert] McNamara was saying that we'll be home by Christmas and all that. So, no one was sure about all this. But, these things were beginning to pop. So, I think you saw in us lieutenants because we could see it in the instructors that we were getting much more serious about what we were doing. The emphasis and the concentration on tactics and everything else, you could see it much more.

Allison: When did you decide you wanted to be infantry?

Zinni: In the first Junior PLCs, when they began to explain what MOSs were and what everything is, I just said, "Boy, that's mine." I just have to be in it.

Allison: You never thought about anything else?

Zinni: I never thought about anything else, never crossed my mind. And, I gamed it when I was in Basic School because there was one—they didn't have intel as primary MOS—but, they actually had one intel billet. But, there was a guy in our class that had been a staff NCO in intelligence. So, it was clear that he was going to get it. So, I put that as my second choice. I figured that was a throwaway because they want me to get one of

my three choices. Then, third I put tanks or something. But, I tried to game it to make sure I got my first choice, infantry platoon commander.

Allison: Do you remember your company commander?

Zinni: The company commander was Major Black.

Camp: Sam Black?

Zinni: Sam Black. Yes. Actually the XO was General [Wallace] Greene's son.

Allison: Do you remember any other classmates of note?

Zinni: Oh. Yes. Dave Richwine. Ted Hopgood, [Richard] "Butch" Neal.

Allison: All in your company?

Zinni: Yes, all in my company. Richwine was in my platoon.

Allison: Any particular memories of them, anecdotes or anything like that?

Zinni: No. They're all positive. Dave, I think we all really respected him. He was one or two in our platoon and I think everybody really thought highly of him. He not only seemed to have all of the skills and qualities, did well physically and academically, and leadershipwise, but he was one of these people that got along with everybody. He tried to pull his weight and also help everybody else. I didn't know Ted Hopgood that well. I knew Butch Neal.

Allison: You said you partied your way through?

Zinni: Well, it was interesting. You worked hard because you knew there was a war on. But you looked to enjoy your liberty time. I now had a car so you can get to DC and elsewhere on weekends.

Allison: And you started to realize that you were going out in front of troops. So, you better start paying attention.

Zinni: Well, and you know, I think that, to be honest with you, the Dominican Republic [situation] and Vietnam had a big sobering effect. I think we came in as officers and thought, “Hey, things are great here. Do your job but enjoy your free time.” We had instructors at Basic School that were senior officers that had served in World War II. Some of the captains and majors were Korean War vets. We even had some that came back from initial tours in Vietnam as advisors that were decorated veterans. So, as this was building up and we’re dealing with a lot more Marines in combat, we were clear with what this all meant. We had the mentors in senior leadership that understood what this meant. By the time we were graduating Basic School, it was a much different attitude than when we came in. I mean, much more focused and concentrated and understanding that this was serious business.

Allison: Were you seeing some counterinsurgency stuff working into the curriculum?

Zinni: Not much.

Allison: Was it more conventional?

Zinni: It was very conventional.

Allison: They didn’t have the Vietnam village set up there or anything at that time?

Zinni: No. It was basically a very conventional, it was more of a World War II/Korea kind of experience that was reflected in the curriculum, I thought.

Allison: Were you getting a good dose of Marine Corps history?

Zinni: Oh, yes. I mean the leadership classes, the Marine Corps history. All of that was a major part of it. And a lot more on things like drills and other things. They really, obviously put the focus at that time on platoon tactics. This was pre-infantry officer course, IOC. Everybody is trained first as an infantry platoon commander. But, there

wasn't anything for the infantry officers to go on to beyond that. So, there were a lot more tactics I think.

Allison: Infantry tactics?

Zinni: Things that I think maybe now in Basic School may be for IOC. But, in those days it had to all be in there because you graduated as an 0301 and you can't get 0302 until you're in your first command, and after 90 days, somebody had to say you were ready to be 0302.

Allison: How was leadership being taught there?

Zinni: Well, I think several ways. One, the platoon commanders had a big responsibility for that from day-to-day. There was a lot of one-on-one time with the platoon and the platoon commander in there. We obviously had leadership courses—it was basically teaching all of the leadership traits and leadership principles as part of the curriculum. We had the billets assigned to us; they were really our focus. It was clear to us that your performance in those billets means a lot about judgment in terms of your MOS and your leadership skills and your grades and that sort of thing. We took seriously the billet assignments. The one way you could lose the respect of your peers is to perform poorly in a billet, especially when all of the things started picking up in Santa Domingo and Vietnam. If you held a billet and didn't do well in the billet, be it your leadership or tactics or whatever, I think you really could lose a lot of respect in the eyes of your peers. So, there was a lot of pressure just from your peers to do well.

Allison: And there was a peer evaluation?

Zinni: And there was a peer evaluation. Yes. I mean it wasn't a popularity contest. I didn't see that much of it. It was really performance. People evaluated you on how you

performed.

Allison: What was your most difficult subject there? What gave you the most trouble?

Zinni: Admin. That's been my most difficult subject for 30 years as my fitness reports reflected. I had a hard time with administration. I really was into the tactics and the weapons and that sort of thing. But, I tended to honestly not pay as much attention to that. I think the subject of my counseling sessions with the platoon commander was admin.

Allison: Okay, sir. What was your ranking at TBS?

Zinni: I did okay. I was middle of the class. To be honest with you, the academics, I was kind of after college, burned out on academics. I probably didn't study unless it was tactics or weapons or things I really liked or I felt were important. I didn't put as much time in on law or admin and that sort of thing. But, I did fine on the leadership stuff and I did fine on the overall military skills, some of which were really tough. I had to learn to swim at The Basic School. I was the only one in the entire company that couldn't swim when we got to Basic School. My platoon commander said, "You know, if you pass the swimming test, this will be the first company since we've been keeping records at Basic School that 100 percent will have passed the swim test." So, he said, "What you need to do, it's not an obligation, but on the weekends you need to go over to the pool." There were a couple of Red Cross lifeguards there. There was a lance corporal over there that I worked with every Saturday. I'd go over for half a day. But, learned to swim and passed the test like everybody else. As a matter of fact, on the last day—I didn't take the test until the last day you could take it, you know because I really wanted to do as well as I could. They put the entire company in the stands and I'm the

only one in the pool. But, I made it. But, that's where I learned to swim was at Basic School.

Allison: I don't even remember a swimming test at the Basic School.

Zinni: Oh, yes. We had to swim, it was a first and second class test. You had to minimum pass the second class. The first class was a little bit more involved, diving for the rifle and all of that. But, again, I had this lance corporal who was fantastic. I'd go over there on Saturday mornings. He told me the first day. He said, "Lieutenant, if you come over here and you work with me, you'll have no trouble passing." That was true.

Allison: Did your Company do a BasCoLEx [basic company landing exercise]?

Zinni: Yes. Yes. I was a platoon commander for that by the way; the Papa boats. It was a really bad day. The seas were rough. We got wet. It was in the winter. It was not terribly cold. But, it was cold. I remember the seas were really rough. It was really hard getting the nets down and holding the nets. We had the old APA, coming down and holding nets and coming down and bringing all of the weapons. Then, the Papa boat hit a sandbar and we had to go over the side into the water. It was at Little Creek.

Allison: Looking back on TBS and then in the perspective of your overall career, what's the significance of TBS for the Marine Corps?

Zinni: Well, I think that TBS is important in several respects. One, it brings everybody together. It's a common thing for all officers. What I was glad to see, you know, we had some aviation programs where you didn't have to go to TBS. I was really glad to see that we changed that and every officer, regardless of MOS, has to go to Basic School. It's the common ground. It shapes you. It instills that sense of camaraderie across the MOSs. I mean, it's not like in the Army, where you have Fort Benning and

then Fort Sill and all that. There's one common group and it brings you all together. I think it's the point where you transition from wherever you come from before that, whether it's an ROTC program or OCS or PLC or Naval Academy, to common ground. There's no assumption. There's no assumption of anybody being automatically superior by one system or another. You can prove yourself on your merit. Then again, it's like I said before. It's the first time you're really treated as an officer. You're exposed to that idea. By the time you leave, you have a basic understanding of what an officer should be about. You need that experience. I think you're well prepared for what you need to do. And I think Basic School is like Boot Camp. It's one of the secrets of the Marine Corps. It's what makes us what we are.

I think the socialization to the Marine Corps is the key. It's either the recruit training or it's Basic School. So, it's the socialization of enlisted and officer that make us unique. It's the common ground of that socialization that I think is the key.

Allison: Were future aviators not going through TBS at this time?

Zinni: Not all of them. Obviously if they came through programs like ROTC they did. But, many didn't. Like many of my (in PLCs) platoon mates were going to go straight to Pensacola and not go to Basic School. They were going to be commissioned to go to Pensacola. I was at Headquarters when we made that decision. It was a hard decision because there were a lot of people fighting it. Because if you had Basic School and the aviation training in the obligated time, people getting out, it put them over a certain time period. They collected some amount of money if they failed to augment. They ended up receiving a big chunk of money. The added six months of Basic School that put them into that window for that big chunk of money. So, there was some resistance

to sending them to Basic School. But, thank God the commandant said, “No, everybody goes to Basic School.” That was General Wilson if I remember right.

Allison: Okay, sir. Anything else of TBS?

Zinni: No.

Allison: Now you said you met your wife while you were there?

Zinni: Well, some of us would go down to Mary Washington [University] and we would date there. Usually what you did is you went to one of the dorms to see if there were any girls who wanted to go out. Usually there’d be like three or four of us lieutenants or more. Almost toward the end of Basic School, I met my wife down there. Really, when we would go out a lot of times it wouldn’t be like you went on a specific date. It would just be a group of girls and a group of us guys and you would go out somewhere. Her father was a Navy captain. He had retired in Atlanta and I knew she was from Atlanta. So, at the end of Basic School, when I got my orders to Camp Lejeune, North Carolina—this tells you how much I knew about geography—I said, “Hey, that’s pretty close.” And I wanted to go see her and go see Atlanta. I didn’t realize how long of a drive that was. I got to know her parents and we started to date seriously. Over the time I was at Camp Lejeune, we eventually got engaged and married.

Allison: I wanted to go back in time and ask, how’d you get to know President Kennedy?

Zinni: I was one of the bunch of high school kids that worked for the Democratic Party campaign, like I said. What we basically did was we handed out hats and stickers and that sort of thing. But, you know, we had meetings and all that stuff. He came to a place called Norristown, Pennsylvania, which is outside of Philadelphia. So, we all

went up there to a rally that he came to in one of the stadiums. Then, I guess because we were high school kids, we were taken over to one of the hotels where he was staying. So, they kind of put us there in the lobby and when he came through, he shook our hands and talked to us.

Allison: Did you meet him after that or no?

Zinni: No, that was the only time I met him. I talked to him for a while.

Allison: Was Jackie with him?

Zinni: No, he was by himself. Interestingly enough, his brother, Ted Kennedy called me last year or so. He was asking me questions about Iraq and everything. And I say, “Hey, by the way . . . “ and I relayed the story. And, amazingly he knew everybody. He said, “Well, that was Norristown and this was the campaign guys there.” He knew everybody who was involved in that local campaign. He really had a phenomenal memory of the whole thing.

Allison: Did you want to go to Camp Lejeune?

Zinni: Well, we all wanted to go to Vietnam. But, the policy at that time was no lieutenants out of Basic School would go directly to Vietnam. They wanted the lieutenants to go to either Pendleton, Hawaii, or Lejeune first. I think there were only like two regiments in when we got out of Basic School. They weren’t assigning any lieutenants directly to those regiments. You were going to go somewhere else then eventually over. So, I ended up getting orders to Camp Lejeune, 1st Battalion, 6th Marines.

Allison: What were your impressions of that?

Zinni: Well, here come my guys from my Basic School class. We arrive and we get checked in. We get parceled out to the units. We go down to the battalion. There are about five

lieutenants from my company, and we meet with the battalion XO. The battalion XO looks around at us and he says, “You know. I have to send one of you to supply school.” Because in those days the supply officer and comm officer weren’t necessarily supply or comm, by MOS, in the infantry battalions. If you didn’t get a supply or comm officer, you sent an infantry officer to supply school or comm school. So, he said, “One of you is going to become the supply officer.” He’s looking at us and he says, “Let me look and see what your majors were in school.” All the other lieutenants were phys. ed majors. So, he comes to me with my bachelors of science in economics. He said, “I think I’m going to send you to supply school.” So, I said, “Bulls——t!” The major did not sit right with that. He said, “You’ll do what I tell you.” I said, “I’m an infantry officer. I didn’t come here to go there.” He said, “Well, if I make that decision, you’re going to go there or else I’ll send you to ITR [infantry training regiment].” I didn’t even know what that was, but it had infantry in the title. I said, “Well, if it comes to that, I’d rather do that.” So, I go down to my company—actually, Jim Beans was the company commander, a great company commander. So, for, I guess about a month, maybe a little bit more than that, I get my platoon with a great platoon sergeant; an old guy from the Korea War, Bronze Star. He was a tough old, leathery guy. He taught me a lot; he said to me the first day I checked in, he said, “Lieutenant, one of my jobs is to make you a better officer for your platoon.” He says, “It’s up to you. I’ll give you a lot of advice about how to do things if you let me. We’re going to work together. We’re a team.” I really liked him. I said, “Sure, Staff Sergeant Ball, whatever you think.” And he said, “Now, here’s the way we should do things. You never come in the squad bay without telling me you’re coming in because

I need to go in and make sure it's squared away. When you come into the squad bay, it should not be unannounced. I make sure the Marines are ready to receive it." He said, "We inspect weapons. If you take a weapon and it doesn't meet your standard, you turn to me and say 'Staff Sergeant Ball this weapon is . . . ' whatever is wrong with it.'" He said, "Because I will have inspected it ahead of time. So, it's not going to be that Marine's fault. I will have passed it before you see it, so you say it to me. Then, I'll correct it." He said, "If a Marine has a problem and comes to you, give the squad leaders the first shot to solve the problem, then me." I mean, there was all of this kind of advice like this that made clear what our roles were.

Allison: Good advice.

Zinni: Oh, yes. He said, "Now, I will explain to you what to expect from a staff NCO and what we expect of an officer." I'll tell you just to give you another example. He always did things to make me look good in front of the platoon. One day, we were on mess duty so all of the troops were over in the mess hall on mess duty. He would take the squad leaders when we were on mess duty and he would have squad leader school. He would take the MCI [Marine Corps Institute] course as a group and he would work on them with the squad leaders. So, I'm coming through the rec room, and they're taking the MCI. Now, when you walked into his little MCI cubicle, he had taken every MCI course in the Marine Corps. He'd taken all of them. He had all of these certificates of completion out. He'd taken these courses a thousand times. So, he's got the squad leaders there and they are going through a land navigation course problem and he wouldn't tell them how to solve the problem. He'd say, "Well, now, what do you say? Why are you hung up on this one?" He saw me come through. He says, "Oh,

Lieutenant we're really stuck on this problem. Maybe you could help us out with this."

So, I came over and I looked at the problem and I worked it all out. He says, "Thank you, Lieutenant. We would have never gotten that one figured out." I walked out and I'm thinking, "This guy's taken this course before." I went back and I said, "You knew how to answer that." He says, "Yes, but it's good for them to see the lieutenant do all that." He knew I would figure it out. The platoon was much different in those times. My platoon was 'T/O' [table of organization; properly staffed]. I had every platoon billet filled with the appropriate grade. A staff sergeant as platoon sergeant, my squad leaders were sergeants, my fire team leaders were corporals. I mean, the corporals handled the problems. It was rare to get them to the level of the squad leaders or even the platoon sergeant without being taken care of. There were only two married, Staff Sergeant Ball and my guide were married. Nobody else in the platoon was married. Those were different times.

Allison: They were different.

Zinni: Yes. Your rifles were strapped to your racks. You had your rifle 24/7.

Allison: M14s?

Zinni: M14s, yes. It was a whole different environment. I mean, the staff NCOs and the NCOs were experienced. A lot of time in and handled it pretty well.

Allison: This is 1966.

Zinni: Nineteen sixty-six, yes. Right into 1966. January 1966. So, I was there for I forget how many months. But, then the thing came up about supply school or ITR. So, I didn't want supply school. So, they sent me to ITR.

Allison: They still remembered you.

Zinni: They remembered me. So, I go over to ITR. I'm in utilities. I was living at Camp Geiger in the BOQ and commuting to mainside. So, ITR was at Geiger. I get my orders to report immediately. So, I run back and the admin chief told me, "Lieutenant these orders are for today. You've got to get over there right away. You can't wait. You've got to get over there right away." So, I rushed back to Camp Geiger. I go right into the regimental headquarters at ITR. Well, soon as I walk through the door, the big, burly major sees me in utilities and says, "Who the hell are you?" "Well, sir, I'm the second lieutenant checking in from 1/6." "Why the hell do you report in your utilities?" I said, "Sir, they told me I had to get over here right away." "You idiot." He's really on me. I thought, "Oh, hell. What a way to start out here." I'm feeling bad about leaving my platoon. It's breaking my heart. Now this. The CO of the regiment is waiting to see me, and I'm thinking here I am in utilities and I get to get chewed out by some colonel. I walk in, and the colonel says, "This is what I like, a lieutenant that's ready to go to work." I thought, "Whoa. Thank God." He said, "You know what Lieutenant? I'm so impressed with this, I'm making you a company commander." He said, "You're going to have November Company." And, N Company was a big deal because some of the companies were advanced infantry training companies, so not only did you put people through the basic infantry training that all Marines go through after Boot Camp, but, then the ones that stay behind for advanced infantry training to become infantry MOSs (weapons, machine guns, and mortars and that sort of thing) get the advanced training. N company did that training. I became CO of N Company. It was a great experience. I had an old first sergeant who had landed at Eniwetok, a great gunny, and a set of staff sergeants that were superb. And, it was permanent

company. I had permanently assigned staff, with some really sharp people, as opposed to temporarily assigned personnel as other companies had. Of course, now Vietnam was really starting to spin up—24/7 pumping troops out. The camps were starting to swell and troops were coming through in large numbers. Especially since we were training infantry MOSs. It was very intense. But, it was a great experience. I'll tell you, I got a lot out of ITR because all you did all day long was training. It was all infantry tactics and individual infantry skills. And weapons. I mean every weapon and you're the range officer through all of this. So, everything from the grenades to mortars and machine guns, all the weapons systems. We were running classes through continuously. So, I stayed there for seven or eight months in N Company. Then, I went back to 1/6. When I came back to 1/6, I went to Charlie Company. I was the company commander for a while. The company commander left so I was the company commander for a few months as the billet was gapped.

Allison: Were you a first lieutenant now?

Zinni: I was a second lieutenant, company commander. But, I had N Company and then I had Charlie 1/6.

Allison: So, you were impressing someone there.

Zinni: Not really. I think it was just a matter of fate. I don't think the battalion commanders liked me. What was really interesting in N Company, I started to get these really fantastic fitness reports. Then, the regimental commander of ITR goes back to the battalion commander or battalion XO of 1/6 and thanked them for sending this lieutenant. They thought, I'm sure, "Who the hell's this guy," because I'd only been there for a while. I got sent there because the XO was pissed off at me. So, then they

went back to ITR and said, “Well, give him back to us. We’ll give you another one.”

You know. I got pissed. I said, “I don’t want to go.”

Allison: You didn’t want to leave ITR.

Zinni: Well, you know, in 1/6 they were ready to shovel me off. The ITR colonel made me a company commander and I was really loving it. I said, “You know, I want to stay here and be a company commander.” So, I actually stayed for an extra couple of months. Then, I do go back. So, when I go back I go into Charlie Company and as soon as I get into Charlie Company—the company commander was a great guy, Charlie Sampson, really knew his stuff—taught me one thing. Nobody messed with him. He was kind of outspoken, and one day I said to him, “You know, sir, how come it is that when you speak everybody listens. Nobody messes with you?” He pointed over to—he had big bookcases in his office and he had these FMFMs and everything. The reason they don’t he says, “is because I’ve read and I know and I study everyone of those things.” He says, “Nobody messes with you when you know your shit.” That was a piece of advice that stuck with me. Then, he left and I became the company commander for a few months. Then, I went down to XO when a new CO arrived.

Allison: Was Lieutenant Colonel [D.A.] Clement that you were . . .

Zinni: Lieutenant Colonel Clement was at ITR. He was my battalion commander back there. A great leader.

When I went back to 1/6, I was company commander for a few months. Then, as we started getting all of these troops and everybody back from Vietnam—they had just finished their initial tours in Vietnam, I went back as XO, then was a platoon commander. We were getting ready to make a Med cruise but Vietnam was building

up. All of the lieutenants in the battalion got orders to Vietnam except me. I was the only one who didn't get ordered to Vietnam. We all thought we were going to go. We were kind of told we would. I couldn't believe I didn't have orders to Vietnam. I was crestfallen. I went to see one of the captains there that I knew. He said, "Well, you know we're getting ready to go to the Med and we need some continuity. They're probably going to keep you here for that reason." I thought, "Here we go. We're going to the Med and I'm going to miss Vietnam." Now, McNamara was saying it was definitely going to be over by Christmas. So, I had gotten engaged, and I called my fiancé, and I said, "Let's get married before I go to the Med. I'm obviously going to miss the war and all. Let's get married now." So, I had to go see my battalion CO because you had to ask permission to get married. He said, "Yes." Then, we had "lock-on." He said, "You need to be here. You can only take a long weekend off." So, my father-in-law arranged for the chapel at Portsmouth Navy Yard. So, my family comes down from Philadelphia. Her mother's family was from Portsmouth. Her parents came up from Atlanta. We were married. We took a short honeymoon in Williamsburg, Virginia. I went back to Camp Lejeune after the wedding and as soon as I got there, my orders were there to go to Vietnam. But, they were as an advisor—different than anybody else's. Here's a second lieutenant. I'm looking at these orders that say report to the Marine advisory unit. All of the other lieutenants had orders to either 1st or 3d Marine Division. I said, "What's this?" So, my troops by now in my platoon are all Vietnam vets. So, I'm asking the platoon members who were in Vietnam what this is about. And they said, "You're a dead man! You will be with the Vietnamese military." I thought, "Holy cow. I just got married and I'm going into this,

and I don't even know what it's about." So this was really confusing. We had a staff sergeant that was really sharp, really squared away. He was in the Marine security guard in Saigon. He says, "Lieutenant, let me see your orders." He says, "Oh, you're going to the Marine advisory unit. This is advising Vietnamese Marines. Their headquarters is in Saigon." He's telling me all about it. I said, "This sounds a lot better." I had to go to Fort Bragg, the Army Special Warfare Center, MATA course, military advisor and training assistance course for six weeks and then over to Vietnam.

Allison: What did you think of the course?

Zinni: I really liked the course. I thought it was fantastic. That's where we really learned about insurgencies and guerilla warfare.

Allison: What did they concentrate on there?

Zinni: They concentrated on four things. One is understanding insurgency. There was the most phenomenal instruction in insurgency. The second was a set of military skills that you needed like weapons. You had all the weapons of the world. You went through this course and there were all kinds of weapons. Then, there were demolitions and communications courses. So, there were three technical-type areas. Then, you learned the Vietnamese language. They had Vietnamese families down there who were hired, that taught the course in Vietnamese and then took you to their homes to show you the Vietnamese customs, Vietnamese food, Vietnamese history. Then, you had some basic counterguerilla tactics. You went out and you actually fought like a guerilla to understand the guerilla. So, you had sort of the theory of insurgency and counterinsurgency. Your BOQs there had libraries full of books on insurgency and counterinsurgency. You had those old eight-track tapes with the language training

reinforcement on them. It was six days a week, long hours course.

Allison: Very intense.

Zinni: Very concentrated and long hours. It was about six in the morning until the very end of the night.

Allison: That was short course. I noticed that it only went from 4 January 1967 to 11 February, a little over a month.

Zinni: It was very intense. I got a lot out of it. It was stuff I pretty much knew, but you were dealing with non-U.S. weapons, too—everything, all small arms. The demolitions I pretty much knew from the ITR because I worked demolitions. But, they taught you more about the application of demolitions. You actually blew bridges and things; 82d Airborne engineers built these bridges for their training, and we went out and blew them up for ours. The communications equipment was something I wasn't that familiar with. So, you know, we were down there learning how to really get into it, because you're on your own a lot as an advisor. You have your own comm equipment. But, they're manned by Vietnamese. You have to know how to maintain them and operate them.

Allison: Sounds very good.

Zinni: It was really good—really good. I remember one Saturday morning, we went in to one of the classrooms and this Army captain stood up and he said, "Over the next four hours, I'm going to describe to you how the village in South Vietnam becomes communist." And he tells a story that just held us spellbound. He was a great speaker and it was exactly how the insurgency works and how they function. All of the books on insurgency were being written then were what we read. I felt that it was a good

preparation.

Allison: Did your wife go down with you?

Zinni: No. She went back home to Atlanta.

Allison: What did she think when she heard you had these orders for Vietnam?

Zinni: Well, you know, her father had been in the Navy during World War II and a Naval Academy graduate. He commanded CB [construction battalion (Seabee)] units during the war. Her cousins were in the Marines. So, she pretty much knew—her uncle was a Marine during World War II—what to expect.

Allison: Did anybody go through advisor school that we would know now?

Zinni: The senior Marine down there became a general, Joe Hopkins. He was the Marine liaison down at Fort Bragg at the time we went down there. In my class, there weren't any Marines that I knew from before. The only one was Ron Ray, who came from 3/6 and we went over together. He was a first lieutenant. I was a second lieutenant.

Allison: Did they say that was kind of strange for a second lieutenant to go through that course?

Zinni: Yes. When I got to the military advisor unit, the first thing they did, the CO of the unit looked at me and he said, "What the hell am I going to do with a second lieutenant?" They couldn't figure out why I got assigned. I was the only second lieutenant ever assigned to the advisory unit, with the exception of a second lieutenant that was a motor-T officer that was a prior enlisted. He had been a master sergeant in motor transport. He had gotten one of those temporary commissions and was sent. I was the only pure second lieutenant ever sent there. What had happened, as I later found out when I got back and ran into the monitor, I think it was Tom Hemmingway at the time. He said, "We just ran out of officers." There were a number of wounded and sick in

the advisory unit. Of course all of the officer billets in the 1st and 3d Divisions were being fleshed out and going up north. And, of course, here I was the only guy without orders. They needed an officer. They had no captains and no first lieutenants. They'd run out of first lieutenants. Well, Ron Ray went with me. He was a first lieutenant. So, they had to pick a second lieutenant, and I was the only one there.

Allison: I bet they had to get approval to do that, too.

Zinni: I don't know. As a matter of fact, I didn't think about it. It was when I get back and Hemmingway was there and he came over to me and he said, "How'd you like your tour in Vietnam." "Fantastic. It's great." He said, "As second lieutenant?" I said, "Yes. I can't figure out why a second lieutenant went." He said, "Let me tell you why that happened. There was absolutely nobody else; absolutely nobody else to take."

Allison: So, the Marine Corps was really being tapped hard for the Vietnam. I mean, it was really snapping them up. I guess we were scrapping the bottom of the barrel.

Zinni: Yes, alphabetically and quality wise *[laughter]*.

But, that's the way it turned out fortunately for me. But, of course that was a fantastic tour. I really thought that both the experience of 1/6 because you got to see the infantry and be a platoon commander, a company commander, and a company XO in rapid succession. And the ITR, where you really saw how Marines were trained and the concentrated infantry training. I think it gave me a depth of understanding of weapons and basic individual skills and how we develop a specialty infantry, MOSs, enlisted MOSs. Those two, plus even though the course was short at Fort Bragg, I really got a lot out of it.

Allison: You really liked the cultural aspect of it? Being with the Vietnamese—that appealed to

you at that time?

Zinni: Yes, I mean if you do something like that as a junior officer, before your views are formed in any way. You are very open. You are looking at things. The thing they told you about being an advisor is that some advisors will go through culture shock. It usually happens in about the first 90 days. Some don't come out of it. I saw where advisors had to be transferred. There were fine Marines but couldn't adapt to a different culture. They actually described what would happen in culture shock. Pretty soon, you can't take the food anymore. The people and the way they act begin to get to you. I mean they describe it and it happens to everybody. You've got to kind of work to fight your way through it and then you're okay. Others cannot come out of it. I saw a couple of Marine advisors that couldn't quite do it and they got moved. But, to me it was just phenomenal. The cultural part of that was fantastic, just a whole new world. I just really emerged myself in it. I made really close friends with the Vietnamese to this day. We have advisor reunions with the Vietnamese, and the Marines that are here that made it out. Besides, obviously, seeing the war from their point of view, I mean, the Vietnamese Marines went all over. In my time there, I went from the Delta to the DMZ literally and everywhere in between. So, you saw the whole war. You saw it from the Vietnamese point of view. We had lived in the villages. So, you saw every aspect of it geographically. You saw it from the people's point of view. You were with, in the Vietnamese terms, their best unit.

Allison: One more question about the training. Did you have the opportunity to do any supporting fires training, close air support, and things like that?

Zinni: The first time I called an artillery round in, it was for real. The first time I ever called

an air strike was for real. The first time I called naval gunfire was for real.

Allison: That's sort of ironic because that was your main job as an advisory, right?

Zinni: Yes.

Allison: It was doing the supporting fires.

Zinni: The first time I called artillery, we were getting ready to cross a wood line with North Vietnam troops dug in the other end. It was pretty close. They started opening up. I hit the deck and the company executive officer—I was with two companies from the battalion—battalion executive officer called me up. I crawl up there. He says, "I need to put artillery over there on the wood line." I was kind of hunkering down. He said, "It's OK. They're firing high. It's really high. You can stand up." So, I stood up and I crept in the artillery fire because it was danger close, it was only a few hundred yards, normally you would call it in and bracket it. So, I called it right in. And I mean it is whacking the crap out of the other wood line. And, I'm standing up watching all of this, looking at all of this. Rounds are coming close to us, too. I'm so focused on this, you know, calling in the fire. I turned around and realized now everybody had gone back down. And the XO says, "Now you get down." Of course, the firing all stops over there. We really hammer them. We cross the wood line. Now, the Vietnamese Marines are kind of giving cheers.

Allison: You came through.

Zinni: The XO is saying, "Well, that was very courageous, you standing there." I said, "Why?" He said, "Well, you know, it was danger close." So, I thought, I was so focused I didn't realize the shrapnel was whizzing around me! That's the first time I heard the term "danger close."

Allison: That was the first time you had heard that term?

Zinni: Yes. I mean I probably heard it before in some class, but I didn't register. Then, I realized, "Mmm. Danger close."

Allison: Now it had a real meaning. Well, I want to get in-depth on this experience that you had. Your advisor experience. I just see that as a pivotal part of your career. Maybe we'd better hold off on that until next time. We can call it a day now.

Zinni: Okay.

End of Session I

UNITED STATES MARINE CORPS HISTORY DIVISION
Oral History Interview

Interviewee: General Anthony C. Zinni
Date: 23 February 2007
Length: 2:25:59
Interviewer: Dr. Fred Allison

SESSION II

Allison: This is the second session of the oral history interview with General Anthony Zinni.

Today's date is the 23d of February 2007, and we're again at the Marine Corps University in Quantico, Virginia. We finished last time talking about your time at Camp Lejeune. Your fellow lieutenants had received orders to Vietnam and you were very disappointed that you didn't get orders. But, then you decided to go ahead and get married, then you get orders. Today I'd like to talk about your experiences in Vietnam with the Vietnamese Marine Corps. But first, since you're married, what was it like having to leave home, leave the family?

Zinni: Well it was kind of sudden, but my wife, her father was a career Navy officer and she had relatives in the Navy and Marine Corps in World War II and other places, so her family was, I think, familiar and experienced with that sort of thing. And I was surprised by the orders because the secretary of defense, [Robert] McNamara, was saying the war would be over by Christmas.

Allison: I think I read somewhere that you were the youngest officer that had been assigned to a warring country as an advisor at that time. When did you go over?

Zinni: I went over in March of 1967.

Allison: What kind of reaction did that get from the more senior officers as you check into these

places?

Zinni: Well, I think the senior advisor, the Colonel Anderson, Nels Anderson, when I first got there, he looked at me kind of quizzically and confused and said, “What am I supposed to do with a second lieutenant?” Good naturedly, but he’s trying to figure out how to best handle this. There was an advisor that was home on emergency leave that was coming back. So at the time I arrived, I was sort of an extra advisor. Even though I was sent over because they had some casualties, some illness, they had others come in. So there wasn’t an immediate place for me. And he thought it best that I spend about a week going through an orientation that they had for all advisors. We went to a place called the Kopler Compound. It was actually named after a Marine who was killed very early in the war, one of the first advisors. But it was for MACV [Military Assistance Command, Vietnam] training and orientation. It was a one-week orientation, sort of familiarizing you with the rules. Especially since we were in Saigon, there were special rules for advisors. Really, some of the rules for the military didn’t apply to the advisors, like curfews and other things. But a familiarization, security briefs, that sort of thing. We went through about a week of that in this compound. We weren’t allowed out onto the streets for a few days and then we were able to get out and sort of wander around. I wandered around the city for a while. Of course, this experience was a whole new culture. Sounds, smells, people. It was totally different. I had never been beyond Camp Lejeune and the east coast.

When I got to the advisory unit, their headquarters was the old French Foreign Legion headquarters on Le Thanh Ton Street, in Saigon, an old, typical colonial French building. When I got there, Colonel Anderson felt that I should spend a few days there

getting an orientation on what the advisory role is about, getting to meet everybody. And he decided that the best thing I would do was join a battalion somewhere that already had its [advisors].

Allison: What was the setup for advisors to the Marines?

Zinni: There were two American advisors to a battalion the way the U.S. Marines worked. Based on Colonel [Victor] Croizat's design, like the French advisory teams. You integrate and operate advisors into the Vietnamese Marines, completely immerse yourself. It shows trust and you build better credibility. Unlike some of the other advisor efforts, the U.S. Army and others that had advisory teams, we were just two officers to a battalion.

Allison: That was a unique way the Marine Corps did that?

Zinni: Yes, and it was Croizat's design. He had felt that the French had it right in terms of if you want to gain their trust and confidence, you've got to totally show that you're willing to put yourself at risk and totally immerse yourself in their culture. Rarely would you see another American, obviously, because the senior advisor, normally a senior captain, maybe even a major, he stayed with the battalion commander, and then the junior advisor, where I spent the vast majority of my time, you're out with companies, platoons, even squads out doing whatever needs to be done. Or if the battalion's split, you go with the XO and he goes with the battalion commander. Colonel Anderson thought I should—because I was so junior in rank, he thought I should spend a little time with a team of advisors and with a battalion as sort of a third advisor, sort of under training. The 4th Battalion of Vietnamese Marines was in the Rung Sat Special Zone. Rung Sat means “forest of death” in Vietnamese and it's down

in the mangrove swamps in the shipping channels leading to Saigon. It's an area that's pretty desolate; swamps, but there's villages there. The Vietnamese Marines would sometimes go down and operate in that area if they had problems because the Viet Cong would get in there and attack ships coming up to Saigon, sometimes with sniper rifles, RPGs, mines, that sort of thing.

Allison: Is that part of the Mekong?

Zinni: No, it wasn't really part of the Mekong Delta. It was a special area, a special zone.

Allison: Okay, southeast of Saigon?

Zinni: Yes. The port down there was Vung Tao. It was very beautiful, it was called the Riviera of Vietnam and the French had made it a resort. That's sort of where you entered the Saigon River and the shipping channels leading up to Saigon. But then you went into these mangrove swamps, which was kind of like the Okefenokee Swamp in the Everglades, very tangled, very thick. So I was sent down there to hook up with a battalion and have the senior and junior advisors there kind of school me up for maybe a week or so before I went anywhere else as they looked for a place for me to go.

Allison: Was it far away, how did you get there?

Zinni: I kind of had an interesting experience getting down there. I didn't know how you got there, usually you get these blanket travel orders where you can go anywhere in the country and you took military air hops. Of course, this wasn't that far from Saigon and so I couldn't figure out how to get there. I talked to some of the Vietnamese and they were saying, "Well, you go by bus." And you can go by bus to Nha Be, and I saw Nha Be was a naval base, like patrol boats, so I actually took a bus to Nha Be. When I got to Nha Be, the Navy officers could not believe I just got on a Vietnamese bus with all my

gear, pack, rifle, everything else. It was just me, an American. I showed up there and they got me a helicopter on down to where the headquarters of 4th Battalion was, which was in a small village called Tan Ton Hiep which was built on stilts. The mangrove area flooded with every tide, and so the houses were on stilts. The Vietnamese Marines there were patrolling the rivers in what they called Dung Nai boats. These were fiberglass boats with high-powered outboard engines. They used those boats and some of the riverine assault boats. This was the Vietnamese version of the riverine assault force that we had on the U.S. side that the 9th Army Division was part of. But they had a Vietnamese counterpart. And so the Marines would operate with these. These were LCUs and others, specially configured with weapons and command and control that made us sort of a riverine fleet. But, the Vietnamese Marines had these specialized small boats. So I went down there and the senior advisor was a Captain Joe Hoar, later he'd become General Joe Hoar. And the junior advisor was a captain named Bob Hamilton. But, obviously, General Joe Hoar went on to be the commander of U.S. Central Command and then Bob Hamilton stayed in and I think retired as a lieutenant colonel or colonel. He passed away not too long ago. But both of them sort of took me under their wing and I spent the time down there getting schooled up with them, getting oriented. The battalion commander was a colonel named Tri, one of the finest officers in the Vietnamese Marine Corps. I mean, eventually ended up as the assistant commandant, but had been here to AWS [amphibious warfare school] at Quantico. After I left the advisor unit, he came to Command and Staff College while I was here as an instructor at Basic School, so we hooked up again. But Colonel Tri was very Westernized. Spoke English fluently, was reputedly one of their tactically and

operationally smartest officers. He had several Silver Stars, all won by saving U.S. units as a battalion commander. He had a tremendous reputation. Captain Hoar and Captain Hamilton, who were considered some of the best advisors, I'm learning from them but also from the Vietnamese side of it. And that's where I began to make some of my best friends. One of them, a then Lieutenant Hoa who was the S-3 of the battalion, he and I became very close to this day. He is now living in Texas. He was put in a rehabilitation camp. He made it to colonel, but was there for 15 years in one of these rehabilitation camps, went through hell before he was released, and was able to immigrate with his family to the United States.

Allison: So that was an important stop for you there, I guess, to prepare you.

Zinni: I think there were a couple things I benefited from that. First was learning from Captains Hoar and Hamilton, and secondly, it was the experience now with the Vietnamese, both Colonel Tri and Hoa, and the company commanders who were really fantastic. They were great officers. I got to know them, I began to make real friendships with them. And that was my exposure, I mean, eating with them, getting to know the troops and how everything functioned. And then the second part of it was the operations down there, which were very unique. It was my first exposure to riverine operations. I got to do more—Captain Hoar and Captain Hamilton put me out there on patrol. The best way to learn is to go do it.

Allison: How long was it before you were out doing real-time stuff?

Zinni: Within a day or two. So I was out on ambushes. I went out and we'd patrol the rivers. We ended up with a whole battalion that was out on part of the rivers and streams, patrolling that, controlling some air medevacs, saw my first firefights, first casualties

down there. Actually, I didn't really see a firefight. I came in on the aftermath of a firefight and there were wounded and dead Viet Cong and Vietnamese Marines because we used Americans to come in as medevac helicopters. And so, I saw my first casualties, first results.

Allison: That must have made a real impression—I would think you'd remember that.

Zinni: Yes. The first time there was a big firefight, they needed to get in medevac helicopters. They had some wounded and killed, some Viet Cong killed. In those days it was a rule that American helicopters, medevacs, would not go in unless there was an American on the ground controlling them. There were no Americans with this Vietnamese unit, so what Captain Hoar had done was had the helicopters stop in the village where we were headquartered, pick me up, and then I would go in with the helicopters. The helicopters weren't happy to have me onboard. They sort of waived their rules about having somebody in the zone. But they said, "Hey, if we got one of your advisors up here that's talking to the Vietnamese on the ground, that's fine with us." So I got up there, had a radio and was talking to the Vietnamese. Now I'm really beginning to use my Vietnamese for the first time for real down there.

Allison: And you had gotten a little language training in MATA?

Zinni: MATA, yes, the military advisors training course. So we went in, and there were all sorts of bodies in the LZ, it was like a mud flat. The Viet Cong bodies were spread out in their pajamas [type uniform] all over. The wounded Marines and the dead Marines were wrapped in ponchos; so as we landed, there were still firefights going on. They wanted to get us out of there right away, so they threw the casualties onto the helicopter and I ended up dragging them in. I had this dead Vietnamese in my arms, so I pulled

him in wrapped in a poncho. And as we took off, with the rotor wash and everything else, the poncho blew open so I had this dead body kind of sprawled across me. I'm trying to talk on the radio, so obviously the adrenaline's flowing and then this rush and this first experience of really seeing casualties. That wasn't my first experience in a real close-up firefight though.

Allison: What kind of a helicopter was it?

Zinni: It was an Army, the first versions of the Hueys. Yes, the first ones. Single-engine.

Allison: How long were you there, with Hoar and Hamilton?

Zinni: I got short-circuited because we had an advisor in one of the battalions who had to go home on emergency leave. His house burned down or something like that. It was up north in II Corps [Corps tactical zone], with the 5th Battalion Vietnamese Marines. And they were in a major operation and were seeing some pretty heavy contact. So they didn't want to be an advisor short. I was the only one available, so the call came down: "Get my butt up to II Corps."

Allison: Then you became the junior advisor for the 5th Battalion.

Zinni: I went up there and the junior advisor up there was a first lieutenant. But he was a Mustang. His name was Jim Laney and I had known him from before. Jim was up there, and he had been a staff NCO, a fairly senior staff NCO, commissioned and he was a senior first lieutenant. So when I arrived up there, Laney had bumped up to the senior advisor and I was the junior advisor. It took me a while to get up there. I had to make my way through different means. I went to Tan Son Nhut. From Tan Son Nhut I flew up into Qui Nhon. From Qui Nhon, the closest city, I took a bird-dog aircraft. This was those little aircraft that were observer birds. They put me in the back seat and an Air

Force guy flew me to a dirt strip where I landed. Spent the night at some Vietnamese Army regimental headquarters and got a helicopter out. And I landed at just about last light and hooked up with Jim on the side of a rice paddy. The battalion was there. At that time, it was still cool up in that area. It was sort of semi-mountainous, but the temperature was not real warm.

Allison: This would be like springtime when you went over there?

Zinni: Yes. When I landed, I was with the battalion commander. The battalion commander was an old warhorse named Nha, N-H-A. And Nha was another legend in the Vietnamese Marine Corps because he had been through some tremendous battles and fights; very heroic, highly decorated. He greeted me and they greeted me. Their sort of command post for the battalion was in this sort of gutted little house that was blown away, parts of it were blown away. And then Jim Laney said, "Tomorrow we'll cross over this rice paddy. You'll join the XO." These were like parallel paddies that we're moving along. We have two companies on each side of the paddy, so there'd be two companies on the other side with the XO. And there was another Vietnamese Marine battalion in the area. And so I looked across the paddy, it didn't seem that far away. I said, "Why don't I just go over there tonight, Jim?" He said, "You can't cross the paddies because we've been in firefights all night and this whole area's covered by fire, you have to wait."

In the morning, before it gets light, they'll send a patrol and they'd go around. But he made it seem like a short distance by night. And he said, "By the way, every night, since we started this operation, we get hit pretty hard." So he says, "Be prepared, because tonight we'll probably get it." I thought, this is it, there's going to be a firefight.

Allison: This would've been the first time in combat for you.

Zinni: This was really the first time. And so we set up. The front of this house had been blown away, so it had a back wall and parts of sidewalls, but no front. And the front was facing this paddy area. The Vietnamese Marines had dug in on the edge of the paddy, and so we were in a defensive position at the edge of this paddy looking out on this open paddy.

Allison: This was a standard bamboo house?

Zinni: It was like a mud house. So I kind of laid out my stuff that night, my rifle and everything, M16. Nobody else had an M16.

Allison: You had an M16?

Zinni: Yes. I drew it from the Marine advisor unit senior headquarters with the Naval Advisory Group. The Naval Advisory Group had Navy and Marine advisors and reported to MACV. You checked out your gear at the Naval Advisor Group, the NAG. This was in Saigon. And when I went to check out weapons, they sort of let advisors pick any weapons they wanted. So I got a .45 and all, and they had just gotten in M16s. I had never seen an M16. So they say, "Do you want an M16?" So I took it. My M16 was a big deal. Everybody was interested in it. So I had the M16 and laid out my stuff for the night. I kind of thought about what I would do. I'd kind of roll out, get my rifle and be facing the enemy. Well, I rolled out but I ended up facing the back wall. I couldn't see anything, I didn't know what I was doing.

Allison: It was just totally dark.

Zinni: Well I was also a new guy and all that. The battalion commander was getting a big charge out of watching me rumble and fumble around in this firefight.

Allison: Was it just small-arms fire coming in at you?

Zinni: It was all small arms, but it was hitting the walls and everything else. Really a pretty heavy firefight. The Vietnamese were returning fire out there, too. Rounds firing, us firing back out at the muzzle flashes. It was fairly close in from another wood line. Finally, it died down, but there were rounds all over the place. This was my first firefight.

Allison: Initiation.

Zinni: Yes. Each of the advisors had a cowboy. A cowboy was like a batman but we called him a cowboy. He took care of your stuff, cooked for you, watched out for you; just sort of a batman and you had a radio operator. So when I got there, I had the cowboy that was assigned to the former senior advisor. When I got there, he said, in Vietnamese, “Be very, very careful what you do, where you go (he knew I was relatively new) because it’s very dangerous up here and all.” So, after the firefight was over, I stepped out in front of the house and stood up and was kind of looking out over the paddy and a round zinged and hit right between my legs right into the wall, and I kind of ducked back into the house. So the next morning, the cowboy, as I was waking up at first light getting ready to pack my gear, he had brewed me a little cup of coffee, came over, gave me the cup of coffee, and he had dug the round out of the side of the wall and handed me the round. He said, “Keep this and remember, don’t be stupid.” *[laughs]*

Allison: Do you still have it?

Zinni: No, I don’t have that round. I have the round that shot me. I don’t have that round anymore.

Allison: The first time you’re in the rack there and the firefight starts, the rounds where hitting

the house and all, were you scared or was it just reflex? What did you think at that point?

Zinni: I think I was really excited. I mean, the adrenaline was flowing, this was sort of your baptism of fire. I was trying to pick out targets that I could shoot at, but I had to be careful because the Marine lines were right in front of us, a few meters in front of us. So you had to be careful where you were firing. Rounds were hitting all around us. So I think it was more exhilarating. When it was over, the firefight—it didn't last that long—what I realized from it was that I had no clue about who was firing what, how much fire we were receiving, how big the enemy force was. I couldn't tell you what kinds of weapons we were firing and that sort of thing. What impressed me about that is, a few months later and many firefights later, I could tell you then, like all the advisors and everybody else who had been aiding the Marines up north, the more experience you get, you can sense if you outgunned the other side. You could determine who you were up against, "Feels like about a platoon just from the fire," which was mainly AK47s, maybe some RPGs, maybe some light machine guns. But the more experience you got, it was amazing how much you could then discern the kinds of weapons [firing at you], you could have a good sense of whether you outgunned the other guy. By the way the firing was happening or where it was coming from, you had a sense of where they were trying to maneuver, maybe on a flank or doing other things. And so, from that first firefight, where I couldn't have told you anything about the nature of the fight from that perspective, later on it just struck me how much more my senses, with each experience, were beginning to pick up more and more of that.

Allison: I guess that would be significant when you're talking about training and stuff, how realistic it should be.

Zinni: I think it's also important because one of the best things about the advisory tour, and later on they wanted to have advisors as second tour Vietnam officers. When your first tour up there [is] as platoon commander, you come back for a second tour obviously makes sense. You're much better equipped to provide advice and everything else.

Allison: The advisor thing sounds like more of a challenge.

Zinni: It was much more of a challenge. The interesting thing about the advisory tour is you're not commanding units. So, you're not into the moving units around, directing fire. You're right up there with it. You're right with the commanders. You're obviously doing the fire support work, coordinating with other units and everything else. But you're detached enough from those kinds of, immersed in those command decisions—which I would later experience as a company commander—that you can observe things. You began to have a little bit better sense of time and position to assess things. So, what I found myself doing was in my mind, it was almost automatic—to analyze things as we were going along. What are we confronted with? What's happening here? And one thing that I learned from the Vietnamese and others was when you thought about the enemy, to think in terms of your equivalent counterpart from the other side. Think in terms of what he's doing. What you would do if you were in his shoes or what you think he's doing. And that really helped you better to understand. Then, as your sense became more attuned to what you were up against in terms of fire, what you sensed in terms of movement, it then began to make much more sense. And so, every time we got into a firefight, I ended up with this sort of mental picture of some sort of Viet Cong or North Vietnamese company commander or battalion commander and what he was attempting to do. And then it began to make sense more. You began to sense what the

units were about based upon the firepower. This is really an attempt to put a base of fire down, that's a maneuver element you're hearing from the other side, or whatever. So, from those first experiences, where everything just seemed confusing and the sounds and the explosions were all sort of a cacophony, it was amazing how much more sense it began to make. And almost from firefight to firefight, you were learning a lot more.

Allison: It made more and more sense? What else about the advisors?

Zinni: Yes. The other, too, of course, with the advisor unit is because they [Vietnamese Marines] were the national strike force, along with the Vietnamese Airborne, they moved all over Vietnam. So I saw the war from the Delta all the way up to I Corps. So I spent time in the Delta, I spent time at III Corps, I spent time at II Corps, I Corps, Rung Sat Special Zone, Capital Military District. We were in the jungles along the Cambodian border, the villages and towns along the coast, and the mountains and the mangrove swamps in the Delta. What had happened is I became the utility infielder in the advisor unit. So they were bouncing me from unit to unit. So I served in—there were five battalions in the field and a sixth one coming online in the Vietnamese Marines. And I served in five of those six battalions. And also on some of the task force headquarters, which would be equivalent to our regimental headquarters. So, in moving around from unit to unit and area to area, I saw all sorts of different styles of fighting, different climate and geography—and the enemy was different in these areas, too.

Allison: That's quite an education, then.

Zinni: Yes. And they had a "quartering act," so when you were around villages and things like that, you moved into the houses with the people. I would always move into a house with a family and you'd get to know them and you'd get to understand the war and the

culture from their point of view, which I found when I got back was very different from what my counterparts were experiencing in the 1st or 3d Marine Divisions, seeing the world almost totally from a U.S. unit perspective. I mean, being immersed and living with them, eating their food, wearing their uniforms . . .

Allison: How long did it take to get used to the food?

Zinni: Well, there's something unusual about me, I swear my father did it to me because he always said to eat everything. There isn't a food I can't eat or don't like. I can eat anything.

Allison: I mean are you talking about worms and stuff like that?

Zinni: Yes. Down in the Rung Sat Special Zone we would cut these grubs out of the mangrove trees, these sort of white looking larvae and we would fry them up and eat them. I had duck's blood peanut soup. We had monkey that we shot. And later on, when we operated in the jungles along the Cambodian border, we would have to spend two hours a day foraging and hunting for our food, and we had to do it tactically. We would pick bamboo shoots and breadfruit, but then we would also hunt. You would kill a snake or you'd kill a monkey. In the Rung Sat Special Zone, they would kill like these iguana lizards or even the crocodiles that were in the water and eat them. So the food was very different, very strange. They had no rations. At one time they had rations, but they were poorly canned and all, they had caused some botulism. So there were no Vietnamese equivalent to our C-rations at the time. So if we were around areas that were populated, we bought food from the market just like anybody else in the units. But, if you were in the bush, you had to fend for yourself. We would always have rice. If we went out on patrol, we would cook the rice in little balls about the size of your fist, and that was one

day's worth of rice. That would be cooked up and made into balls and we would keep them in these small aluminum cans that we tucked in our packs. You'd eat a ball of rice a day, so you always had the rice. If you could find some sort of vegetable, again, a bamboo shoot, a breadfruit, there were some greens that the Vietnamese Marines knew were edible that we would pick. But sometimes it became pretty tough to find food.

Allison: That's interesting. You said you would actually set aside two hours a day to find food, to go hunting.

Zinni: We had to. Their field skills and their small unit tactics and what they understood were tremendous. I learned a lot from them. We would always do the foraging or hunting for food, if we were out in an environment like the jungle or whatever, at about midday because you didn't want to do it close to where you were going to set up your patrol base at night, in case anybody saw you if you have to shoot or whatever. Everything was done very tactically, the occupation of the bases, the way the patrols were done, the way we would leave stay-behind ambushes if we thought we were followed, the way they would police any position they had held to make sure nothing was left behind. They always criticized Americans because we'd come across an American position or base and there was always ammo, weapons, all kinds of stuff. Even C-Ration cans that you could put a M26 grenade in there, and it would hold the pin down. That way, we'd just tie it on a wire and spread it across and if you pull it out of the can.

So they even criticized Americans for leaving the cans around. And they thought that that kind of stuff drew animals and other things, which was a considerable problem in the jungle. We had to worry about snakes—actually, in the jungle too, at one base I was in, we had a tiger come through at night. It actually crapped in our patrol base and

went out.

Allison: Nobody saw it?

Zinni: Nobody saw it but it panicked everybody because they knew it was in there, they could hear it but couldn't figure out where it was. The Vietnamese Marines were very good about security. No one fell asleep and you paid hell if you fell asleep.

Allison: Discipline was pretty stringent, I understand.

Zinni: The discipline was tough. I actually saw Vietnamese Marines beaten to death by their company commander and first sergeant for raping a girl in a village. They were pretty harsh. Their brig back at Le Ton Ton was brutal.

Allison: They beat him to death for raping a girl?

Zinni: We were in a village and I got up in the morning—I was living in a house that was abandoned. No one was living in it. It was the house of an old lady that passed away and there was nobody living in it—I kind of liked living in a place with no family around. My cowboy came in to me and there was all this sort of yelling and things going on. You could tell people were getting their butts chewed or something. I saw the company commander and the first sergeant were really agitated, and I asked my cowboy what was going on and he said, "Something very bad happened last night." And so, the platoon was lined up and they brought this girl out who really looked like she'd been abused and was really traumatized, and she picked out two of the Vietnamese Marines. And they laid them out on their stomachs, took all their clothes off, and the company commander and the first sergeant had a couple ax handles and beat the crap out of them until they were dead.

Allison: Both of them were dead?

Zinni: Yes. Chucked the bodies into a vehicle that had come up in the village on a resupply convoy and sent them out. I remember one instance where we had a recruit that fell asleep on duty, which is a no-no. And then we went out in an area that was really bad Viet Cong, up in northern II Corps. The company commander took all his gear and his weapon off, and we were inside this sort of little perimeter on a hill, had some barbed wire, and he pointed way out to a hill out in the boondocks. He gave the kid a hand grenade and said, "You will go to the top of that hill and you'll throw the hand grenade so I can see it, and then you'll come back," no weapons or anything else. So obviously, sneaking out there and blowing this up, I mean, this is about four or five kilometers out. He's going to attract the attention of bad guys, then he's got to make it all the way back. The kid made it. Never fell asleep again. That's a punishment.

Allison: What did they think of Americans? I mean, in a general sense, or in a military sense.

Zinni: I think there was a close bond Marine to Marine. They felt this really strong Marine-to-Marine connection. They looked down on their own Army. They saw themselves as very elite and special. They saw this bond with the U.S. Marines as a very close one. Their senior officers, the vast majority, had been to our schools here. They've been to staff college.

Allison: Colonel Croizat had set up the advisor program that had been going on for about 10 years at that point, I believe.

Zinni: Yes. And actually, the roots of that went back before that because he had spent time in Indochina as an observer with the French. And then after the end of the Indochina War, he stayed on to help form what were called the [DeSault] Units. They were sort of like a naval riverine assault force. That always was attributed as the beginnings of the

Vietnamese Marines. It's what evolved into becoming the Vietnamese Marines. So he set up the initial [DeSault] Units and the advisory effort with them. And that evolved into the Marine advisor unit as they became the Vietnamese Marines and started to form their own battalions. First a few battalions—eventually, by the time the war ended, they had a division of Vietnamese Marines. When I was there, like I said, they had five battalions in the field and a sixth battalion developing standing up and coming into the field.

Allison: You mentioned they were highly respected in the society . . .

Zinni: Well, in the first part, they were. When you went around, the people, their term for their Marines is [Tui Quon Lu Chien]. If you were TQLC, which most of the Marines had tattooed on their arms, like our USMC, if you were in Saigon or something and they saw that—of course, we wore their uniforms.

Allison: The tiger stripe uniform?

Zinni: The tiger stripes with the green berets. So, when they saw us in those uniforms, the people were in awe. In some areas that were not so friendly, because there were parts of the country we went into that were obviously heavily Communist influenced. There was a place, for example, in II Corps where Ho Chi Minh had left stay-behind cadres after the Indochina War, did not withdraw them in accordance with the accords with the north, to sort of foment the insurgency down there. And when you went into those areas, you could see some of the school diplomas still had Ho Chi Minh pictures. Even though this was in the south, they were very strongly Communist. I would say they had a fear of the Vietnamese Marines. Most of the Vietnamese Marines, when they were in boot camp, had tattooed, beside the TQLC, they had Cop Bien, which was their slogan,

“Tigers of the Sea.” And they had Sat Cong, which means “kill Communists.” So those kinds of tattoos on your arms marked who you were, and you didn’t want to become a prisoner of war as a Vietnamese Marine. It instilled a sense that you didn’t want to be taken prisoner, either. They were tough kids. Some of the old warhorses—there was a company commander in the 4th Battalion that I got to know very well named Kinh. He was 55 years old; he was a company commander. He had fought in World War II with the French and he had fought in the Indochina War with French colonial forces. He had fought in Cambodia. He was sort of legendary in the Vietnamese Marines. He marched at the head of the National Day Parade every year, where the top company commander of all the Vietnamese Armed Forces marched, and that was based on number of kills, weapons captured, there was sort of a formula. He always marched at the head of it. And this guy was a tough old coot. He was wounded badly when I was there. They shot up his legs. This guy had been wounded about nine or ten times in his life. The doctors had said he wouldn’t walk again and just a month or two later he’s back in front of his company. This old guy, really sort of a crusty old, tough Marine. And very savvy. Very savvy. They had people like that in there who had been around for a while. I got a greater appreciation for their view of the war because they were in this for the long haul. We were over there for a year. It’s a lot different perspective. They saw things in the long term. They wanted to fight on their terms. They wanted to fight where they had the advantage. They were tremendously courageous. I saw them in their firefights, admired their courage, but they didn’t do stupid things. There were times when they would disengage with the enemy because they would say, “That guy outguns me right now. To get into this fight means I get whacked. I’m going to disengage, break contact. I’ll

see this guy again.” You didn’t see that same mentality in the U.S. forces.

They were shrewder about how they handled the combat. And the other thing that was important to them, too, was there weren’t an endless stream of replacements.

About 50 percent of all the Vietnamese Marines had malaria. I can tell you, they rarely got back to see their families. They got back maybe once a year to the base camp.

That’s where the families were.

Allison: The rest of the time they were out on operations or something?

Zinni: They were out. They were all over the country. They weren’t like the Army units that had a fixed place like they were in a given area so they were around their homes and families. They weren’t.

Allison: They’re like the fire brigade.

Zinni: Yes, exactly, the Vietnamese Airborne and the Vietnamese Marines. And so their approaches were much different. When they locked horns, they were tremendously courageous. Their small unit tactics were very good. They did not have the level of training that U.S. Marines had. So in some of the technical areas, like communications and other things—and they didn’t have the equipment, so you didn’t have a radio for every squad, for example, like you did maybe up north with the Marines. When you got into the staff NCO and NCO ranks, they were promoted because they were battle-hardened and had a lot of experience, but they weren’t going to any schools. There wasn’t any NCO school or anything like that. So there wasn’t that sort of technical education; there was a lot of battlefield experience. In terms of logistics and sort of a lot of the staff functions and in terms of use of fire support, not so much just being able to call in fire, they had their FOs [forward observers] and all, but fire support planning,

integrating fire support like artillery, and naval gunfire and air all together, that's where the advisors really helped them. They didn't have that kind of experience at that level.

So, when you got into some of the big fights or when you had to really integrate a lot of fire support, air, handling medevacs, working complicated logistics requirements and everything else, lift for them, tactical lift, that's where the advisors came in.

Allison: So you got a chance to do a lot of that?

Zinni: Yes. The first time I ever called in an air, artillery, and naval gunfire was for real. I never did it before in training anywhere. So the first times were all real times. The same with coordinating with Air Force, the C-130s, gunships, but also our own attack helos and our own fixed-wing air support, working and running observer aircraft, our own OV-10s in the Marine Corps or the 01 Bird Dogs that the Air Force flew. You learn a lot about techniques, too. When I first had them up, your tendency is to say, "Okay (let's say you were in a river working the Delta or the Rung Sat Special Zone), we'll run you up and down the river in front of us." And the Vietnamese said, "No, no, you don't want to do that because if the Viet Cong see it, they know which direction you're going because they're watching the planes go back and forth running along your river route; run them back and forth perpendicular and then once in a while run them over to another river, even though there's nothing there; but remember, the Viet Cong can see this, too." So those were the things that you picked up on, techniques and other things that were really important.

Allison: What did the South Vietnamese think about their own government and all that was happening there? I heard they were even involved in the coup that kicked out [Ngo Dinh] Diem.

Zinni: Yes. The Vietnamese actually executed him.

Allison: They did? They executed him?

Zinni: Yes, the 4th Battalion that I was with in Rung Sat Special Zone. Not that battalion commander, this was a couple years before, but they had actually been the ones to storm the palace and take the palace and capture them and execute them. When I was there in 1967, there was an election. Thieu and Ky were vying for the presidency, and they had all the series of coups by the generals, Big Minh, Little Minh.

Allison: Yes, after Diem was gone, it was just one after another.

Zinni: Yes. And the Vietnamese Marines were kind of the coup makers. All the Vietnamese Marine battalions were pulled back to Saigon and set up a ring around it and controlled it. It was kind of an understanding that whoever controlled the Vietnamese Marines were going to control—to become the president and control the elections. So they were very politically oriented. The Vietnamese Marines were used to put down the Buddhist revolt up in the north in Hue and actually confronted the 1st Army Division, because they were largely Buddhist, and put the thing down. And we had incidents when I was there, too, where we got into fights with other South Vietnamese units. So there wasn't the sense of Vietnamese in the way we think of "I'm an American." They very much thought of themselves as Marines and something special and separate.

Allison: As a political force?

Zinni: Yes. I don't think there was that kind of nationalism in that sense that we might have or that same sort of patriotic fervor. They were very much into the fight because of who they are; they're Marines.

Allison: Would you say it's almost sort of tribal in a way?

Zinni: Well, yes, I mean—the Marines were their tribe and that was more important to them, in many respects, than what it meant to be Vietnamese.

Allison: That's interesting.

Zinni: Their courage was tremendous. Their loyalty to each other was great. They truly were in the long war. I laugh when I hear that term today. I mean, here I was around people who have been fighting forever. Like I said, people like Captain Kinh and some of the older colonels and all, this goes back to the Indochina War, even to World War II. So the combat experience was tremendous.

Allison: It's hard for us to identify with as Americans. I mean, you get in a war and then you get out as soon as you can. That's our purpose. We don't understand this.

Zinni: From my point of view, watching the people, I didn't see that we understood—here we are over there saying, “Hey, we're trying to stop Communism. We're fighting for you to have a democracy and free-market economy,” and they didn't even understand all that, the people. And they look back at Saigon and saw these rotating generals and corrupt government—that really didn't ring with the people. And what began to bother me as I came out of that war was, we talk about hearts and minds, but we're not really understanding that we're not winning the hearts and minds here. I mean, we're fighting the war. We're killing a lot of the enemy, but that's not going to get us to the end. Body count's not—we're not going to win this from the bottom up just on the battlefield. It seemed to me, the political piece to this wasn't being structured right. That government in Saigon was not responsive to the needs of the people. There was no loyalty to that government. There was no sense like we have of our Constitution, that the government had a framework, our founding fathers, the way they structured it, balance of powers,

what it meant for democracy, the republic. That's part of who we are as Americans.

None of that was being developed or wasn't there.

Allison: When they heard the term "democracy," it didn't mean a thing to them?

Zinni: It had no meaning. I mean, you had people in the south who hated the north, like the Catholics who came south and obviously hated Communism in the north and had come south. But, by and large, I would say the people were caught between two forces that seemed equally as threatening to them. I mean, they just were going to be in the middle of a firefight. All they wanted to do was pray that it didn't come in and survive it and try not to take sides. Because during the day, it may be American and South Vietnamese, but at night it's probably going to be Viet Cong or North Vietnamese. And they were caught in between. Most of them that I saw, they were trying to just survive and get through it.

Allison: So the balance of power then, is the people themselves, would you say?

Zinni: Counterinsurgency, in those days, we were studying insurgency at the MATA course. We read all the literature. President Kennedy really saw that the confrontation with Communism would come through these proxy wars, through these insurgencies, Communist inspired insurgencies. We were reading Bernard Fall. We were reading Mao Tse-Tung. The shelves were full of books on insurgency. Che Guevara and the Latin American experiences, the Communist experience in Southeast Asia, Africa.

Allison: *Small Wars Manual*?

Zinni: Well, the *Small Wars Manual* I always thought was a little bit different. That was how we ran our operations in the Caribbean.

Allison: Was that something the Marines were looking at in those days?

Zinni: Yes, but I think some of the counterinsurgency writings then were much better than what you have now. At the end of Vietnam and the fall of the Soviet Union, the changes in Communist China and all that, we kind of brushed it aside. But, what we were learning then was right, we just didn't know how to implement it. We were saying, you've got to win the hearts and minds. You've got to be able to control the people and provide for their security and the resources and the infrastructure. You've got to change the environment that encourages the insurgency. I mean, if it's a poor political system, poor economic system, bad institutions, you've got to rebuild them. And then you've got to fight the guerillas and understand how to fight them on their level and adapt, because they'll adapt faster than you. We can see that in Iraq right now with the attacks on the helicopters and the IEDs [improvised explosive devices] and everything. They're adapting quicker than we were. I would say, arguably, on the counterguerilla stuff, we were adapting fairly well. Could have been better, but we were adapting on the ground. We used the helicopter very effectively. It confounded them. Once we got out of those helicopters, our forces were too heavy. If I had to categorize the Vietnamese Marines and the difference between them and what I saw in American units, they were true light infantry. Those were very good light infantry. The battalions were about 500 men. They didn't carry flak jackets and all this other stuff. They traveled very light. They lived off the land.

Allison: Their covers were soft covers?

Zinni: Mostly soft covers. Once in a while they might have a helmet or something. But they traveled very light. And so their tactical mobility afoot was much greater. They didn't rely on lines of communication. They didn't give away positions by bringing in

helicopter resupplies. They were great light infantry. And I thought that there's a place for that in those kinds of battlefields, and we really didn't have that. If you looked at the American infantry, even the straight-leg Marine and Army straight leg, we were really heavy infantry. We didn't really have anything equivalent. Later on came the light divisions in the Army, but they never really took hold. They might've been more effective in that war. The helicopter was of great use to us. We adapted in terms of equipment, everything from poncho liners to jungle boots. We were learning about the experience. I think we were learning about the insurgent, the guerilla. Our tactics were adjusting. I don't think we ever understood that, on a strategic level, we had to insist and build a different kind of governing system in South Vietnam that the people could relate to. And the connection to the people had to be stronger. Where we did programs to go into the villages to help them, to show Saigon's reach to do positive things, some of that went on but not to the extent [it should].

Allison: So you would say the big mistakes in Vietnam were not implementing what we knew was right?

Zinni: When I look back on Vietnam, I think there's two mistakes we made, or, two reasons why we couldn't win that war. One, we never really won the hearts and minds and did those things to connect with them and give them something to fight for. The second thing is, we never took the war to the north. We bombed, but there were all sorts of qualifications that limited effective bombing: you draw China in, you draw Russia and all that stuff. But as long as the North was free from their homeland being threatened, they were free to just come South and raise hell, to resupply and motivate the insurgency to send forces down. If you beat them, they just went low for a while and

then came back. And I think the lesson we have to learn is the source of your problem has to be under attack. And if it's a hearts and minds issue, you'd better be winning them. And I think a lot of that is applicable today, too. Those are the two mistakes or two flaws in what we tried to do. Without those two things happening, winning the hearts and minds, bringing the war home to the North in the sense that you threaten the ground, you couldn't win.

Allison: Where did stability fit in, as part of winning the hearts and minds? Is there a place for stability in there, too?

Zinni: There is, but I didn't really think South Vietnam was unstable as a society. It was a homogeneous society. There were certain elements within the society. There were friction elements, Buddhist versus Catholic. There were other ethnic groups.

Allison: But it wasn't like Iraq, with ethnic or religious fighting?

Zinni: No, it's a land of plenty. Food was not a problem there. If you look at the Mekong Delta, it's the rice bowl of Southeast Asia. Easy access to food, a basic sort of livelihood was all doable there. The family structure, the village hamlet structure, the districts, it was all fairly effective. There was an insurgency because you had a very powerful and charismatic leader in the North in Ho Chi Minh.

Allison: Was his popularity apparent where you were?

Zinni: Among some places. In other places you didn't see it. There was hatred for the North because it was Catholic versus Communist, which is a natural adversarial relationship. And, in some places, they had vested interest in the South. But I don't think they viewed this—that they even understood what Communism was all about and really what democracy was all about in its truest sense. They never experienced any of that.

They went from monarchy to corrupt generals running the country. There wasn't that sense of the political dynamics that we maybe were able to understand. And the insurgency was there because, first of all, it was planted very well. Ho Chi Minh left the cadres behind. He was a master at it. The whole Maoist theory of revolutionary warfare and how to conduct it and how to operate with the people where you create either fear, apathy, or support amongst the population. I mean, they were masters at that. They wrote the books on that. And there was enough dissatisfaction with their own government and their own rotten life that wasn't being cured. We weren't improving the environment that bred the insurgency.

Allison: So these things were tenable, what the Communists were saying?

Zinni: Yes. I'll always remember one Saturday in the MATA course at Fort Bragg. Eight in the morning they shove us into these big old buildings in what was called Smoke Bomb Hill in Fort Bragg, old World War II kind of barracks they used for classrooms. And it was kind of cold because it was February and we go in there on a Saturday morning and this Army officer stood up, and he said, "For the next four hours, I'm going to describe to you how a village in South Vietnam becomes Communist." And this guy was a tremendous speaker. He never used a slide or anything else. Stood there and talked about the evolution as to how it happens. How there's an infiltrator from the South, how certain young men that are angry are brought out and educated, and how this whole thing happens and what beats it. To me, it was the most insightful thing. I mean I was on the edge of my seat for the four hours of this class, listening as everybody else in the room was. I mean, it was tremendous and frankly you could clearly see how people like Ho Chi Minh understood how to convert.

Allison: And we never got it.

Zinni: We never got it. Certain people understood it. There were all sorts—there was a Lieutenant Colonel [William R.] Corson, a Marine that wrote a lot of nasty books and sort of believed that the war was being fought in the wrong way; [John Paul] Vann and others that understood some of that. I think we trapped ourselves in believing this could be decided on a battlefield. The rest of that stuff was kind of nice to have, but peripheral. And then we short handed the battlefield to body count. Body count was a big thing.

To the Vietnamese Marines, the body count was unimportant. We would go into a big fight and you'd pile up a lot of enemy bodies, and I would get a call from the senior headquarters, the Corps level on down, "count the bodies." The Vietnamese Marines would look at me say, "We're not counting bodies. What does that mean?" I can remember one time, it was the first real battle of the Tet Offensive. It was up in Qui Nong. We had come in, we were the Corps reserve, we got committed and we came into this Army regiment that had really been decimated. We came into the positions behind them and we were launched into an attack with just two companies on the ground. We wanted to get two battalions on the ground instead of two companies. The general who had completely lost it, I mean he had lost control, we found him incoherent, babbling. And he ordered this Captain Kinh, who was now the XO of the battalion with the two companies, to attack. And of course, the enemy had been chewed up. But this North Vietnamese and Viet Cong units had positions that they had attacked and attacked, went on air strikes to no effect. We had just come in by helicopter and Kinh wanted to wait until we got the two battalions. And the Vietnamese army general said,

“No, that’s an order.” So he was angry. He told me, “Don’t come with us, we know we’re not coming back.”

Allison: Did you go with him?

Zinni: Yes, I went with him.

Allison: Why?

Zinni: Well, I was running air and everything and I wasn’t going to stay up there with the Vietnamese army. As our helicopters were coming in, they were trying to grab onto the skids. They were decimated. And there was a U.S. Army unit on the flank too it was a mech infantry. And the company commander came over and found me and he said, “If you guys are going to attack, I’ll join you.”

Allison: So this is an Army captain or something?

Zinni: Yes, a U.S. Army captain. He said, “I’ll join you. I’m not staying here with these guys,” and so we put together a little task group. We started down into these lines that you can see and there’s bodies all over the place. I think what had happened, when the helicopters landed, the Viet Cong and the North Vietnamese had been pounded by days of air strikes. They were trying to come in and take Qui Non when they were caught approaching the city. And when they saw it, they thought this was probably heavy reinforcements to break their back. They had started to withdraw. So as we came down into their lines, they were fighting a delaying action. We hit their lines and right behind their lines were these huge pits where they were dragging the dead bodies off the fighting positions and dumping them. It smelled; it was summertime. The stench was unbelievable, the bodies. They had tried to cover them up real quickly and as we uncovered them, you could see—the size of an 8 x 10 room dug for these mass graves. I

reported back that they were delaying, they were pulling back now, and we were trying to run air and artillery on them and everything else as they were pulling out. And that we had breached their lines and there was a mass of bodies. And I get a call saying, "Count the bodies." There were like, I would estimate in some of those graves there were 50, 60, 80 bodies. And my Vietnamese officer said, "I'm not counting bodies. I don't count bodies." And we kept moving because as they were withdrawing we wanted to get into them, try to take out some of their rear guard delaying forces and get some fire support on them, which we did. We chased them out and actually the U.S. Army units came in and blocked some of them. But the body count mentality was just American.

Allison: That was associated with McNamara and Westmoreland.

Zinni: It became a measure of success in and of itself. In other words, if you were a small unit leader, it was like a measure of success in the ratio in the body count. And there were cases of people then they decided, well, you have to have a weapon with the body and then most people had weapons they put with bodies.

Allison: To make sure it was a real soldier?

Zinni: Yes. To me, it was ludicrous. It meant nothing. Most of the time, unless you were fighting mainline NVA units and they were in uniform, but if they were Viet Cong, especially if they were stripped of their gear, you couldn't tell. And a lot of these fights were in villages and places where I'm convinced there were some innocents that were killed, too, in villages and others by the fire. I remember one firefight where after we got to their lines, there were women in the positions and we had killed, young women who were fighting side by side. So you can't just make a determination on age or sex or

that sort of thing.

Allison: That might change your perspective on women in combat, though, too.

Zinni: Yes. Once when we got hit and we overran a position, I saw these two women who were very young girls. I mean, I would say they were probably in their late teens, early 20s that were killed there. To me, it was a shock. And one of the Vietnamese officers said, you're going to find that's not uncommon. You're going to find women fighting side by side with the men. It's what you're going to see with the guerillas. This, to me, was rare. But to them, they understood that. But, the bodies in and of themselves didn't mean anything, and I think most of us that were junior officers in Vietnam, whether you were with a U.S. unit or advisors, began to feel this emphasis from the command on body count was way out of whack. It didn't measure success in any way. I mean, it was about as relevant as taking terrain. In that kind of combat, terrain doesn't mean anything. You can come back and fight on that terrain tomorrow, next week, next month, next year. It wasn't processing terrain or processing military forces as we think of in conventional warfare.

Allison: The strategic center of gravity was the people.

Zinni: Yes. I think the strategic center of gravity was clearly the people, and I think the operational center of gravity was the ability to affect the North's ability to prosecute the war. I don't think we hit either of those. I think the tactical center of gravity, and again, I don't think we were effective, is that the other side picked the time and place for the fight. I think I read a statistic that something like 80-some percent of the contacts with the enemy during the course of the war were initiated by the enemy. So I think, on a tactical level, picking the time and place for fights—and that's a function maybe of

intelligence and other things and understanding—at a tactical level, we never really affected that very well. I think at the operational level, as long as the North didn't feel threatened it could commit totally to the South and had plenty of time to do it. It wasn't constrained. If they took a lick, they could lick their wounds and come back. And then I think the strategic center of gravity were the hearts and minds of the people in the South. Those were the three keys and I don't think we touched those keys.

Allison: Interesting. We had a lot of learning for us in Vietnam. It's just a huge pivot for the country. So many things are bounced off of it and compared to Vietnam today.

Zinni: What I saw also, especially from the advisor perspective, was when we'd get back to Saigon, you saw how the United States came in there in such a big way. We ended up making small cities. The worst of what we are was there on display. If you went around Saigon at night, there were all these American soldiers out on the town, in the bars, almost the ugly American mentality. The necessity of that overwhelming amount of rear echelon and staff people and everything, done in that way—it reminds me of now of what you see in Baghdad in the Green Zone and that sort of living in palaces and that sort of thing. We never learned that it brings the worst when you insert yourself in a culture where you're alien and you're not going to be received or understood. What I learned from that first tour is, you have to do it on a minimal basis and what you put in there, it has to blend into the culture. You can't create an American culture in there. It's not even the best of American culture that you end up bringing in when you do that.

Allison: That's interesting. Okay. Did you know a captain by the name of Moriarty? Dale Moriarty.

Zinni: Yes. I got to know him well. He came in at the end of my tour. He was a great guy. We

had one thing in common. We both got about every disease you can get. I ended up, after almost a year tour, I ended up with hepatitis, mononucleosis, malaria, and dysentery. I was about 123 pounds when I was evacuated. Mo had hepatitis, too. It was the plague of the advisors. Every advisor got sick. The question became how sick you became. Some of us were very, very sick; others maybe not as much. But one of the things that struck me is, about a year ago, the year 2006, we had a reunion of the advisor unit, which we try to have every year or so. It's a group that was only together a small period of time. So it's a small group and we've lost some advisors since. And there are actually Vietnamese Marines that are here in the States, so we try to get together. We had one in Quantico at the Research Center. There's a master sergeant, active duty, that collects uniforms of the advisors and he puts them on mannequins. When I walked into the research center, what struck me, and it really hit an emotional chord, were all the jackets on these half mannequins. Two things struck me. One, it was all the names of the advisors I knew, so it was kind of emotional. But the second thing is how skinny we all were *[laughter]*. Those jackets wouldn't fit halfway around our waists. Because we were, obviously, with the food and constant moves and the conditions there, we were all *[very thin]*. You don't realize it because the Vietnamese are small.

Allison: That's part of blending in, I guess. What other combat experiences are particularly memorable to you?

Zinni: Well, in II Corps, in my time there, we probably saw, or I saw, the heaviest fighting up there in Binh Dinh Province.

Allison: That's part of Operation Pershing?

Zinni: A part of Operation Pershing. It was a long-running operation, the 1st Air Cav in II Corps, and the units up there. The fighting up there tended to be more intense. More North Vietnamese, mainline Viet Cong, full-time Viet Cong that were much better.

Allison: More conventional you mean as opposed to guerilla warfare?

Zinni: More conventional, yes. For example, in the Rung Sat it was very centralized because it was a swamp river. In the Delta and in III Corps and in other places out in the jungles along the Cambodia border, it was more what you would think of as the guerilla war, small units. And of course, we broke down into small units. But it was ambushes; it was stay-behind ambushes. It was the kinds of things we would expect in that terrain and that environment. In other places, it tended to be the farmer by day, guerilla by night. It wasn't very threatening. But, there was still a degree of danger and everything else, but different—the Vietnamese Marines knew by the areas they were going to go into what the threat level was and that determined the size of the force you brought in. In places that we would go into that we would break down into squads or platoon-sized units or you would keep together not lower than company or maybe two company formations or battalion formations if contact was going to be heavy and you suspected they would be. So we sort of experienced the spectrum when we were there. You learned a lot from—obviously, when you were up dealing with the North Vietnamese, you were dealing with a highly skilled [force]. For example, the way they would probe your lines at night, one of my first experiences was we were getting probed one night. It was hard for me to understand what was going on. There'd be a shot, there'd be a noise out from the lines and we were in positions that were fixed and had barbed wire and everything else. And the Vietnamese Marines were always very careful never to expose the positions of their

machine guns and heavy weapons—heavy weapons meaning they had these small 57mm recoilless rifles and machine guns. When I was there, they were transitioning over, about halfway through my tour, to M16s and M60s, but when I first got there they had the old air-cooled .30 caliber machine guns and M1s.

Allison: The big old water jacket deals?

Zinni: Well, we didn't have the water-cooled, we had the air-cooled .30 caliber. We had M1 rifles, Thompson submachine guns, carbines, World War II-era stuff. At that time I got rid of the M16 and I ended up with a "grease gun" [M3A1] that I carried which was much easier.

Allison: .Forty-five caliber?

Zinni: Yes, .45 caliber.

Allison: That was your weapon of choice, though? Why did you get rid of the M16?

Zinni: Yes, yes. It was my weapon of choice. Only because I found there were places and times when just a .45 was best. Like we were in an area that, again, it's sort of guerilla [environment], but you got into places where you had to carry something more than a .45. And what I liked about the grease gun is the way the strap worked, you could have it over your pack in the back and it could hang there and you could bring it around front pretty quickly if you needed it. And it packed more punch. It was much easier because your business is with maps and radios. Those are your tools. And so when you needed something more than that, it was light enough and it was easy to carry, it was easily accessible attached to your gear. It was easy to maintain. That thing would shoot no matter what. You could stick it in the mud somewhere and it would still fire, slow rate but it would still fire. When the Vietnamese Marines received their M16s, two

battalions were taken to the training center to get the classes on them and start shooting them. While they were there, there was a big fight in the Delta and they were moved out with their M16s, never having really qualified. They went out, got in this fight with a regiment down there. The Vietnamese Marines acquitted themselves really well. The remarkable thing was, in this whole fight, two battalions of Vietnamese Marines with brand new M16 rifles never having any experience, not one malfunctioned. Up north there were all these malfunctions.

Allison: Right, among American troops?

Zinni: Yes, and complaints about the weapon. So there was an investigation team sent out to try to figure out why the Vietnamese Marines weapons didn't have the malfunction. There were all sorts of accusations they had gotten better weapons or all this stuff. And when they went through it, they could find no differences and one of the Vietnamese battalion commanders said, "The difference between us and you is we clean our weapons." And I've got to tell you, they cleaned weapons with a passion. When you stopped at night—they did it tactically, not everybody cleaned them at the same time, of course, when you were in the field, but the cleaning of the weapons daily and thoroughly was like a religion to them. They really maintained their weapons and equipment.

Allison: Did they oil them down?

Zinni: They oiled them down. They stripped them down. They cleaned them thoroughly. That was their life, they knew. That's their weapon for life.

Allison: But they liked the M16s?

Zinni: They liked the M16. Here there were these little Vietnamese carrying M1s and

everything else and now they had the M16, nice and light. Now they're carrying these light weapons. In half my tour where we had the M16s, I did not see any problems.

Allison: So do you want to talk about the beginning of Tet? Or did you talk about that? Is that the one you talked about?

Zinni: It was almost the end of my tour.

Allison: Where the general got screwed up?

Zinni: Yes. We were in II Corps, the II Corps reserve. We had been operating up in there. Like I said, it was an area where there had been some heavy combat in the past up there. But things were very quiet. Strangely quiet. Nothing was happening. We were kind of speculating whether the enemy was withdrawing, regrouping, or if he had just been overwhelmed. This is in late '67, that maybe he's pulled back. There were some contacts along the Cambodian border and Laotian border, but basically, it just seemed like the whole country had gone quiet. Here we are at II Corps, where you could always count on firefights, and things had just gone so quiet. On the series of bases that we had, there sort of like in the plain, the Bong San Plain, there were these small hills Route One went up, and we were occupying these hills. All of a sudden, we get this report that had begun with an Air Force Bird Dog—it had seen what he believed was an expeditionary field antenna. And when he first reported it, they thought, an expeditionary field antenna from some Air Force guy, it's probably a clothesline or something. So they decide to send out an Army patrol to check it out. Never came back. Then they sent, from the 22d ARVN Division they sent a company out. The company got wiped out and they realized something big was in this area. So they sent the 22d Division, it moved in, locked horns, with this huge force that had worked its way down

the mountains. There was a place in II Corps in the northern part, almost where it borders on I Corps that runs almost to the coast. And it was a traditional route they used as sort of a logistics trail. We used to interdict it once in a while in some of the villages in the mountains at the end of the chain that went into the coast. They had obviously gotten down and what we would later find out, they were in position for the Tet Offensive to attack Qui Nhon. All the coastal cities were going to be attacked. They had come down and were discovered. The 22d ARVN Division locks horns with them and they're really getting whacked badly. They committed some other Army units and Corps units. U.S. Army and the 1st Air Cav now were getting contacts. They were further out toward the border of Laos and Cambodia. They were getting contacts, too, but the 22d Division was in danger of falling apart. The two battalions of Vietnamese Marines in the corps were the corps reserve, so we get an alert to move out right away. First Air Cav sent helicopters for us, and I went with the first two companies and the battalion XO and Captain Kinh. And we launch and we land and the helicopters are going to feed in the rest of the two battalions. We were the lead element, so when we got on the ground, this looked like something out of World War I. There were no trees standing and the village it overlooked was a village I had been in before. It was a beautiful village. They used to make rice wine there, so the village was fairly wealthy compared to other villages. Beautiful little homes, they were mud homes but they were nice and the village was nice. And as we were flying I could see that village was leveled. I knew a lot of the villagers and people there because I had spent some time in there. We landed on this hill mass, which were the positions of the 22d ARVN Division, they overlooking the villages with the dug-in lines of the North Vietnamese and the

Viet Cong forces. As we came in there were these holes all over the place and craters and everything else and ARVN soldiers in them and bodies and everything all spread out. As we landed, they came out of the holes and they jumped in the helicopters. They were grabbing on the skids of the Hueys and we were trying to get them off. As we came off, they were running. We landed and we were trying to figure out what was going on, trying to grab these ARVN soldiers that were completely panicking and running, and where the command post was. So we were led down to this one fighting hole, which was not really even a fighting hole. It was like a big crater. And in it was this ARVN brigadier general. He had some radios and he was absolutely out of it. He had completely lost it. He was ranting and yelling and Captain Kinh looked at him with almost disdain. He saw Kinh, he saw Vietnamese Marines and then he started yelling at us and screaming and it was hard for me to understand what everybody was saying. I decided to walk away from it because I had heard there was a U.S. Army unit on our right flank. And I walked down the lines trying to find it. I found this Army company of APCs, M110s. I see this captain, Army captain there. He told me, he says, "We've been attacking this position but keep get beaten back." He says, "Every time we go with our mech force, the ARVNs, who were supposed to be providing infantry cover, stay back. We get trapped. Viet Cong come out of spider holes and hit us in the back with RPGs and other things. We lost men and machines." He had maybe about two-thirds of his company there and they'd been through hell. So, I go back to see what's happening with Kinh, and Kinh's got this angry look in his face. He's starting to pick up the Vietnamese Marines like we're going to do something. And I said, "What's happening?" And he said, "We're going to attack." I said, "How can you attack? You

only have two companies. You don't want to wait for the rest?" He says, "We've been ordered to attack. We're going to attack."

And he says, "You don't have to. You should not go. You don't have to go. You should not go." And I said, "No. If you go, I go." So Hoa was now one of the company commanders, the guy who I had met and known and was the three [operations officer], he's now a captain and he's company commander. He had one of the companies on the ground. One of my best friends out of the Vietnamese Marines. So I said, "Well, we've got an Army company here. Let me talk to him before we go." So I went down there and Hoa's company was on that point with his gun. So Hoa and I go down there and the Army captain, I remember his name was Kelly, he was later killed. He said, "If you guys are going to attack, I'm going with you. I'm not staying here with these guys. If you attack, we'll go with you." And then he said to me, "Just do me one favor. Every time we've attacked with these guys, they've fallen back and left us exposed. Don't fall back." And I don't think he realized who Hoa was and that Hoa spoke English. And Hoa turns on him and he says, "We're Marines. We'll be in front of you the whole way." *[laughter]* And Kelly, laughing, he said "I like this guy. We can do something here." So that's when we went down into the lines. It was clear they were now fighting a delaying action. So we now got into this run and gun battle with them. And we went through that terrain and that village and the bodies and the villagers, and obviously the enemy and ARVN, and it had been hit by a lot of air strikes. And as the force was pulling back, I was calling in artillery and air strikes on them. We had some Bird Dogs up and other things. They were fleeing out to the west. First Air Cav was able to come in and start cutting off some of the remnants that were trying to get into the hills.

Allison: Were you getting any return fire?

Zinni: It was an organized withdrawal. They were fighting a delay. We were hitting their delay forces when we were coming in. It was a pretty good fight all the way in. It's just that they had decided that they couldn't hold. I don't think they realized how small a force we had on the ground. I think when they saw the helicopters they thought this was a major reinforcement. They had been pretty bloodied from all the air and artillery, and I think they had made a decision to do a tactical withdrawal. The withdrawal was well-organized. This wasn't a rout by any means. They were fighting. We had three of our units and we were trying to keep contact with them and stay right into them. It was natural to Khinh because I had been in firefights with him before, he always, literally ran to the sound of the guns. He believed that being aggressive and going right into the enemy would get them off balance and once you rock them, you don't let up. So he wanted to get right into them. Then the other companies were landing and then coming up really quickly. So now we were beginning to build up a force.

Allison: Serious combat.

Zinni: Yes. In II Corps there were other times. I mean there was a time when we had a company in a village that was isolated being attacked by a Viet Cong regiment. I actually had to—there was no advisor out there. I was supposed to stay out in the field. Since I had been out in the field so long, they wanted me to come back and rehab for a day then go back out. I didn't want to do it, but the battalion commander insisted. I came back with part of a platoon. And then when we were going back out, we hear this horrendous firefight. There were no reports of firefights on the radio. This was not one of the strongest Vietnamese company commanders. I'd been in fights with him before,

he could do one thing well but he couldn't put two or three things together. So he wasn't reporting back. He wasn't getting fire support. He was just fighting. And as we got near, and I was with a really good platoon commander, we got down and we called in and he said we're being attacked on three sides and a major firefight. And the firing was very heavy. I called back to the task force headquarters and battalion headquarters and they had no reports of a firefight. So I report back and they were beginning to think I was nuts. Then they were trying to get some air and other things up. I had asked him which side he was being attacked on, and we had to work our way all the way around to the side where he wasn't attacked, we worked our way in. It was a village that had been abandoned. Many of the villages there they actually evacuated and people would resettle because this was a bad area, Communist entrenched. And we go into this abandoned village, I go in there and he's getting hammered on three sides. They're in there beating them off with baseball bats. I get in there and the first thing he says to me is, "We're running out of ammo. We don't have much left and they're coming at us in waves." So I get this Air Force Bird Dog up and he says, "Shit, you got enemy all around you. I'm going to work up an air strike for you to try to get them all." He's off trying to work up an air strike, trying to get it in. And I called back and said, "He needs ammo, badly." And then I get this, how much you want? At that time we just had the M1s and Thompsons and carbines, so the mixed .30 cal. I said, "Just give us some of everything." So they manage to get a helicopter and they're loading up the ammo, and they said, "We've got an Army helicopter out here. We're loading up the ammo in two helicopters. We're going to bring out everything we have." I said, "Get it out here right away." Meanwhile, the Bird Dog who's got the air strike working up and they're going

to come out of Qui Nhon, he looks down, he said, “Hey buddy, they’re getting ready to hit you again.” He said they were like in assembly areas and he said, “They’re beginning to move out.” So, I tell the company commander they’re coming at us again, there’s going to be another attack. And he says, “Fix bayonets.” *[laughter]* We’re down to a handful of rounds. We’ve redistributed ammo and it was a handful of rounds. We just had to fight it out. So we fixed bayonets and everything else and they hit us. We expend virtually all our ammo. It’s hand-to-hand fighting, and some of them get through.

Allison: Were you involved in the hand-to-hand fighting much?

Zinni: Yes. Because of all the fighting and all, I had my head up against a wall and I put my fingers in my ears talking on the radio talking to this Bird Dog trying to get this air strike up as quickly as we can. We were into this, and suddenly my cowboy spins me around and as I turn around, I see this Viet Cong with a Thompson submachine gun and he’s got the bandoliers that have the clips, the magazines there. And he’s looking at me and he’s hosing us down, and then I realize the rounds are all going up high. And I reach for my .45. I don’t have my .45 in my holster. My cowboy and my radio operator had my .45 and my grease gun and they’re blazing away. And this guy’s like 15 meters away. They’re not hitting him and he’s not hitting us. It was almost surreal. And finally, the two of them run out and grab the guy. He was starting to change magazines. They run out and they grab the guy and they bring him in. They whack him a couple times. So now I’m trying to call this air strike and we’ve got this prisoner. We’ve got this guy that they’re trying—and I’ve got to get my radio operator to pay attention. They pulled back, and the company commander says, “That’s it on the ammo. We beat back that

attack, but the next one, we don't have the ammo." And the Bird Dog was saying the air strike's on the way, the F-4s are on their way, but they're starting to regroup and come at you again. Now, all of a sudden, I hear the helicopter with the ammo come up. It's an Army helicopter and he says, "We've got your ammo coming." I said, "Now listen to me, this is really important. We've got enemy on three sides of us. You've got to come in from the west. You've got to come in low. You come right in on my smoke, identify, drop the ammo, turn, go back out that way, and right away." So he comes in. He comes in low, boom. He comes down right on, identifies the smoke, comes down on the smoke, threw the ammo out. And of course, they're breaking out the ammo as quickly as possible, getting it out. And then I said, "Get out of here, get out of here." And he says, "I'm going to fly over and take a look at their lines." I said, "Don't fly over their lines. Go out the way you came in." He lifts up, and he flies over their lines. And I mean a hail of gunfire goes up.

Allison: It's a Huey?

Zinni: It was a Huey. And he begins to climb; there were two helicopters. But then they call back and said that I led them out into enemy fire. I was really pissed. Of course, the task force advisor, the lieutenant colonel back with the task force, they're trying to figure out what the hell's going on. The company never reported a firefight. I'm talking about bayonets and all this stuff. What the hell's going on? They didn't know what the hell was happening. They had no sense of how big this firefight was. Just as we get the ammo out, they come at us again. But we just now get enough ammo in the hands of the troops where they begin to handle it, and then the air comes. Air Force Phantoms come in and whack them and now I've got some artillery going. When I first got there,

when I first came into the position and I'm talking to this company commander and I'm saying, "Why aren't you reporting this? Why aren't you doing that?" He was confused. He was handling the fight on the ground but he wasn't doing the other stuff. This is one of those things now, because this was much later in my tour. I'm hearing the Vietnamese FO calling in a fire mission, and I hear in Vietnamese the coordinates. And it just strikes me, it sort of registers in my brain, he's calling in our coordinates, he's calling our position. And I turned to him and I said, "What the hell are you doing?" And I get on to the artillery advisor and I said, "Check fire, check fire, check fire." And I hear boom, boom, boom *[laughter]*. Then I say, "Get down." And boom, artillery rounds come right in on our position. I say, "Check fire, check fire. He called in our position!" And I give them a new mission. Now, this really gets the task force advisor and the task force commander and the Vietnamese colonel, or lieutenant colonel, they were really fired up. "What the hell's going on out there?"

Allison: Someone screwed up *[laughter]*.

Zinni: Well, we ended up beating them off and then the air strike came in and really hammered them and then they started to really scatter and run once the air started to hit some of their assembly positions.

Allison: Sounds like the guy was afflicted by the fog of war.

Zinni: I had been with him before, and this was the typical guy that couldn't multitask. He could do one thing well, like you have to do in combat and that kind of situation, you had to put two or three things together. And he couldn't do it. He couldn't handle the fire support, control the maneuver, bring in the resupply, give the reports back to higher headquarters. He couldn't put all those things together.

Allison: So it wasn't necessarily the fog of war?

Zinni: Eventually he was relieved and removed at a later time. I had gone from the battalion when it happened. He was one of the few Vietnamese officers that I didn't get along with and I didn't really like the way he did business. In that area we did a lot of things with the Vietnamese for the first time. We did night raids. We did night helicopter raids, and some of them were really successful. On one we attempted to rescue a U.S. Army staff sergeant. Didn't get him, but we got into this area of buildings where he was being held. We got in this big firefight. We had landed at night in Hueys, came down the side of a mountain. It was a classic raid. We had used a deception landing zone, made it look like the company was moving out at last light to relieve another company in position, but they actually went off into an LZ and were picked up by helicopters. After dark came around, off the South China Sea into these rock outcroppings, the helicopters sort of hovered as we got out. About 80 Vietnamese Marines came down the side of the mountain, hit the village from the seaward side, which they wouldn't be expecting. Well, they were, they had a great defense set up. Fortunately, the firing was all high. Got into them, killed 19, captured 32 of them. Just missed—they got the staff sergeant out, just missed him. But we did a series of four night raids with them.

Allison: No NVGs or anything like that?

Zinni: Not in those days, no.

Allison: How did you compensate for that?

Zinni: Well, the commander of the 1st Air Cav wanted to do more night operations. He wanted to get the Vietnamese into doing more night operations. The problem for him was, the ARVN and the others didn't want to do it. So the Vietnamese Marines, he felt,

would be more willing to do these sorts of things. And he had been working night tactics and everything else for the helicopters. As missions came up, not all the intelligence-based missions could be handled by his units. There were too many of them. And this guy was pretty enlightened. He wanted to see the Vietnamese take on more responsibilities, do more sophisticated things. We liked that. The Vietnamese Marines liked that, especially since he was going to give you helicopters and everything else. He believed that you don't push them out of the way and do their fighting for them, you make them fight and you make them fight up front. The Vietnamese Marines really liked that, especially since he wanted to give you the fire support and helicopter lift. So we had worked up these ideas on these night helo-lifts. Coming in and finding places, getting inserted in places where they wouldn't expect us. Right at the end, as the helicopters came down, they would turn their light on, but we'd be in places where you couldn't see the light, like in the mountain outcroppings and all. So we worked up all the details. There was a lot of detailed planning. We did a series of four of them.

Allison: How did you like working with the Army?

Zinni: I liked working with the 1st Air Cav because they really believe in making the Vietnamese fight and supporting them, giving them the heli-lift, giving the artillery, whatever they needed but making sure they were up front in the fight. The Vietnamese had a saying, "You do my job once, I'll thank you. You do it twice, you've got the job." So a lot of times we'd go in these areas where there were U.S. units and we'd say, "These are not ARVN, these are Vietnamese Marines, they'll go up front and they'll fight." Yeah, yeah, yeah, get out of our way. But the 1st Air Cav, when we operated with them up in II Corps, they were big believers in this and they had a hell of a lot of

helicopters, too. So they were more than willing to lend you, not only helicopters, but fire support. I was in a village up in the mountains and we had an NVA regiment coming up to take us out. We had actually forewarning and announcing in the village that they were going to attack our position. First Air Cav, in coordination with our artillery advisor, put a TOT [time on target] on their position and set them up with 714 rounds right on this regiment. They were more than willing to make sure you had all the fire support necessary if you were willing to hang out, hang the unit out. But in places like that, if you needed the lift, if you needed the medevac support [inaudible].

Allison: Who was running the 1st Cav then?

Zinni: I can't remember—the Corps commander at the time was a General [Stanley R.] Larsen at II Corps, an Army three-star. And he was very much into doing it, too. Some of it got a little too crazy, like they'd try to give us scout dogs. The Vietnamese did not want dogs. So we got a scout dog. I said to the guy, "They ate it."

Allison: *[laughs]*

Zinni: It was not good. I reported back that the dog had died. They did not want the dog. It had an ARVN handler that came with him, so right away, this ARVN handler with the Vietnamese Marines. . . .

Allison: There was this animosity between ARVN and the Vietnamese Marines?

Zinni: Yes. For example, we attacked a Vietnamese unit [ARVN]. Somewhere back in the history of the Vietnamese Marines, this unit had abandoned them or something had happened. This was coming off that operation in Bon Song. We were coming back off the operation. We had pushed the enemy back across Highway One and then we were to stop at Highway One because the other side of Highway One was 1st Air Cav and

they were policing up the remnants. So we hit Highway One and everybody was sort of taking their packs off. We had casualties. We had spent a number of days out there. So, as we hit Highway One, there were some of these little shops and stores and places, and the battalion was sort of resting. They were supposed to be bringing up trucks to take us back to the position, back where we left. And somehow they spotted this ARVN unit. It was an Army armored personnel carrier unit and they pulled into the old train station at one end and they went at it. Then Captain Hoa had to go out in the middle of this firefight and try to stop them from shooting each other up. I tried to contact the U.S. Army officer from the other side. He wouldn't come out. His staff sergeant did. His staff sergeant came out. We had .50-caliber machine-gun rounds, recoilless rifle rounds whizzing past us. There was this black Army staff sergeant, Hoa, and me protecting each other, huddling, trying to get them all to stop, which we eventually did.

Allison: That sounds about as perilous as any combat you were in.

Zinni: Yes.

Allison: Being in the middle of that, I get the picture of you being in the middle of a street and bullets whizzing around there.

Zinni: We were. We were in the middle of the street and it was whizzing around and we tried to get them to stop. We finally did. They flew in an ARVN general from the corps-level headquarters. The officers went into some big meeting in the train station. The Vietnamese Marines now completed the encirclement *[laughter]*. And then walked in and said, "No more negotiations. We'll let the troops go but we're going to execute the commander and the executive officer." So that caused a big flurry.

Allison: That's what the Marines had decided?

Zinni: Yes.

Allison: They were going to take the commander and XO?

Zinni: And the ARVN general's beside himself. Now we've got some of the American advisors up to senior officers with the task force, their advisors involved in this. I was on the outside of the building like, wow, just glad that we had survived with this Army staff sergeant here who was a great guy. And finally, the trucks arrived. They had decided to get them up there. So, then the Vietnamese Marines kind of lost interest when the trucks showed up, and they went back, take a little liberty.

Allison: Well this kind of talks about what you were talking about before, their loyalty to the unit more than to the nation or to something bigger than the unit.

Zinni: I wouldn't say they didn't have loyalty to the nation so much. It's just that the strength of the loyalty within that unit as they were, even being a Marine was much more important to them. I put the Army staff sergeant in for a soldier's medal. I mean, really, he put his life on the line.

Allison: Did you get a medal for that?

Zinni: Well the senior advisor put me in for Navy/Marine Corps medal. At least, he told me he did. I never saw it or got it, never thought anything about it. He had told me he would write it up, and he did it when we got back and everything. And then a few months later, this is after I'm back here, I get a letter from a colonel from II Corps headquarters, which I still have, that basically says, "We don't want this to get out, South Vietnamese units attacking each other. What you did that day was tremendously courageous and everything else, but we can't officially acknowledge it. I hope you understand that." I mean it was fine. When you're a young lieutenant and you go to places like that you

think about things like medals. But when you've been there for a while, after you see what's going on, after you're exposed to all that, that becomes old. The people that I saw that were the real professionals, that became something that no one thought about or talked about. I would say in the advisor unit, if you were in a U.S. unit and the things that you saw and did every day, you probably would've had much more in the way of awards. But there's no other Americans around you when it happens. And obviously the quality of the people that I saw, the officers that I was with there, they didn't talk about those things, so they didn't toot their own horn and try to look for awards or something like that. I mean, the advisor unit tried to take care of you on the way out, get you awards, something like that, but no one was out there thinking about these sorts of things. From my perspective as a young officer, I had no idea what merited an award or not. I couldn't tell you that this act was in the line of duty or was above and beyond. I didn't really know. I didn't even think of those things.

Allison: I got the impression, sir, that you really enjoyed it. That you really related to that lifestyle of what you were doing.

Zinni: I really did. I mean, you went through periods like when you got sick or you went through periods when, not being around other Americans for a while—what they had told us in the MATA course is, you go through culture shock, periods of culture shock. Some people don't come out of it. There were advisors that they had to move on and send elsewhere because they suffered this and they couldn't eat the food anymore, didn't want to deal with them. And there was like no foul, no harm. They were sent up north and they were sent home or whatever. And I don't think any advisor didn't go through that. You had to be careful on the other end, too, because you could go native,

too.

Allison: Oh, really?

Zinni: Yes. I remember one advisor, he had extended and he was going to get out of the U.S. Marine Corps. He was going to join the Vietnamese Marines. I mean, he had [gone native]—and they sent him home. So, there were a few that could completely go [native] and sometimes the thing you had to be really careful of, especially first tour combat people like me, is you're watching them fight, these are courageous little guys, and you begin to think, they're really good. They're as good as we've got in the U.S. military, and they weren't.

Allison: They were just good at certain things?

Zinni: They were good at certain things relative to what was there. And we certainly couldn't question their courage and their small unit tactics and everything else. But you could lose that perspective. I went around with advisors that thought these were the ultimate. And the danger in that is then you don't see where you can contribute and help. You don't see where you as an American can contribute. Or areas they need to work on or grow in. From my point of view it was difficult because I didn't know that much to be able to tell them that, but the senior officers did. The lieutenant colonels and majors that were able to say, "No, they have deficiencies. These are the deficiencies they've got to work on, they've got to handle them." And there were things they needed to work on. But for a young officer's first time exposed to this, I was learning more than I was ever imparting and picking up. And again, I really loved these guys. We were in combat together. I watched some of them die. Some of them died in my arms and you connect to them and they become part of you. And that's a bond that's tough to break when you

have this sense of camaraderie that's really strong. And so I didn't have anything else to balance it against because I hadn't had a tour before with Marines, especially Marines in combat, to compare it to. And then later on, going back as a company commander up north, you definitely could put it all in perspective.

Allison: That's interesting but it's cross-cultural. The loyalty—this band of brothers.

Zinni: Yes, you've got to operate in their culture. You have to put yours—and I think this helped me later on in life and through all the different cultures you experience in all the other events in your career, but I don't think it would've happened as well had I not been so new and naïve. In other words, you're immersed into a culture. You are exposed to this. It's kind of, wow. I remember getting off that airplane at that airbase outside of Saigon on that really hot day that first time, sun coming up in the morning with these water buffalos and these people in these conical straw hats walking around. The different smells and sounds and to me, I had just been transported to an alien planet. And this, to me, was so fascinating. And the first days in Saigon when we were able to go out into the streets and meet people and all, and here I was exposed to this whole new culture. To me, it was a fascination. And then being with the Vietnamese Marines being immersed in this culture, not having any American influence, really, out there, you were sort of, all your senses were open I guess is the best way to put it. So you were absorbing everything. You were beginning to see how people thought differently because they came from a different background. What is a culture? It's a society that's evolved because of its geography, its belief systems and everything else that influences it. And it came to this point in time in a different way than we came to it. But you can see the similarities in values and other things, but the approaches were different. And I

think had I experienced my first real cultural difference—later in life I would not have been as open to understanding at all and had a greater appreciation for why that gives you a different perspective as much as I did then.

Allison: That's interesting. It's almost like you think about back in our own country in the early days. People go out and living with the Native Americans, with Indians, becoming almost assimilated into that and how it affected their later life. People like Sam Houston and—he's the only one I can think of.

Zinni: Mountain men. But I really think that I came away from that, I guess because of the combat and the struggle and meeting them, knowing them, knowing their families, the living and dying and everything else that had happened through the whole course of the war. It got to be wanting to understand cultures and why things happen like that, that later on in life as I was exposed to different situations and cultures whether it was Somalia, whether it was the Middle East or wherever it was, the Far East or anything else, it made me more open to bringing in culture as part of the essence of the situation. What are the cultural influences in all this? And how do they see this and why do they see it differently than we do? Or, do they see it differently than we do? And it opens up a whole new way of looking at conflict, I think, that you don't get just from a pure military mentality. And in this day and age, basically ever since the end of World War II these have been hearts and minds conflicts. You do need to have this kind of understanding. It isn't processing the terrain and enemy military formations like conventional wars.

Allison: Like World War II.

Zinni: Yes.

Allison: Operation Billings, do you remember that?

Zinni: Yes.

Allison: That was interdicting the Ho Chi Minh trail.

Zinni: Yes.

Allison: Any comments on that? That was up in the jungle area.

Zinni: Yes, it was in the jungle. That's basically I would call the edge of the jungle where you had the villages. And then we would send small units out on patrols. Usually platoon, sometimes maybe company-size but the companies, obviously, were very small because their companies were not really big. And I would go out with them. To me, that was maybe the most fascinating of all the kinds of operations because we went into the jungle, we lived off the land. Fighting the Viet Cong in that kind of terrain was really different in the tactics and all.

Allison: It was Viet Cong as opposed to NVA?

Zinni: Viet Cong, yes. There were reports NVA. We never ran into NVA up there but we ran into Viet Cong. And they would, with all these patrols—they were patrolling the area like we were patrolling the area. And obviously, they wanted to maintain their lines of communications through the jungle that led down into III Corps and then eventually down into Saigon in the open area. But that was their network, the Ho Chi Minh trail, that we were trying to locate, interdict. And they would patrol it, too, as part of their security. So we would bump into these patrols. In one case, we stopped at night. We would get hit with mortars and other things. Obviously somebody was following us and we would set up stay-behind ambushes and ambush an FO team and took some prisoners. I had to get them back because they were really, in that case, III Corps area.

They were very interested in getting prisoners from that area were hard to come by and bringing them back.

Allison: I've always thought the jungle would be a difficult environment to live and fight in.

Zinni: The jungle out there is—probably few humans walk through it where you walk and the flora and fauna and the way we did—I learned more about jungle-craft, the way you do the scouting and patrolling at that level, the way they established the patrol bases and manned them, how you took care of your needs, how you set up the heads and how you occupied the positions, how you got water and did that, how you prepared your food, and everything else. Because we were very sensitive to noise, anything that created any sensory way of detecting where you were. And so you became much more skilled at that sort of thing. It was very valuable to me. I mean, nowadays, I watch Discovery Channel and these things and I can relate to it.

Allison: You can relate to that. Well you think of that as such a hostile environment. I mean, you see movies about World War II or read books like . . .

Zinni: I think if you go in there and you don't understand it—to me, it's neutral. It's neither hostile, it's neither bad nor good. But if you understand it, I mean, I came away from that experience being able to look at something and say, "That's food" or "That's not." I mean I would not have understood what's food or what's not food. Being able to understand how you can use things in the jungle. We used to take bamboo and they'd make these bamboo clappers. They would split the bamboo, wedge a piece in between and then tie it and then string rope around a patrol base—not rope but string. If somebody tripped it, the bamboo would clap and you'd hear it. So they were able to use that kind of field craft to help set up security and do other things. The way they would

clear minimal fields of fire down low and do all these things, just observing and watching all that and understanding all that and how they went into the jungle and understood how to function in there and live in there, to me was—when I first went out there I carried all this crap. I blew up a rubber lady the first night and the platoon commander looked at me and he said, “What are you going to do?” I told him I was going to sleep on it. He said, “No, no, no. You put a hammock in a tree.” The American hammocks were huge, but they had these little nylon hammocks they carried in their cargo pockets that they had made in Saigon that were pretty sturdy nylon rope. I didn’t have one of those. I had this huge American thing, it was a load to carry in the pack. And he said, “You’ve got to sleep in the trees. You can’t sleep on the ground.” I said, “Hey, I may be stupid. I’m not sleeping in the trees. If people are shooting, I want to be on the ground.” He said suit yourself. I blew up the rubber lady. I tied my hammock in a tree. I don’t know why, but I did anyway and I go to sleep. All of a sudden, in the middle of the night, I feel like somebody’s jabbing hot poker into me. I jump up and I jumped into the hammock. And first light came, I looked down and all that was left of my rubber lady was like about a one-foot-square piece and there were all these ants that were eating it and all the scraps were on the ground.

Allison: Big jungle ants?

Zinni: Yes. So I mean, the first thing I did is get one of their nylon hammocks that were very light to carry. You’d tie it in a tree with—you’d put a poncho with a piece of bamboo band to spread it out, you tie it, you put a sock on either end so the rain and the water doesn’t run in and you put your hammock underneath it and you’re in the tree and that’s how you lived.

Allison: They had it all figured out.

Zinni: And they would make a quick—they would split some bamboo and they'd make a little platform right underneath the hammock that had their weapon and their things on it so they could grab it if they had to roll out of the hammock. So right away you pick up all the things that they were able to do. They showed you how to do it.

Allison: How available was air support out there, could you get it?

Zinni: You could not.

Allison: You were out of radio range?

Zinni: Even helicopters because it was triple canopy. There were times when we would try to bring a helicopter in to get something in and you could hear the helicopter. You couldn't see it. A couple times they tried to drop stuff to us. We couldn't even find it. I was certain the helicopter was over us and dropped something and we never found it.

Allison: So you were on your own out there?

Zinni: We had wounded that we carried for three days, because sometimes it's hard to find a clearing that could be an LZ. I mean the helicopters had jungle penetrators but even where you think you hear the helicopter and it coming down was hard to figure out. I remember carrying casualties for a couple of days before we could find a place where we could, I mean that you can say, well here's a clearing. They were more accurate in the mountains and obviously the open terrain out along the coast where they were very accurate.

Allison: But you really were on your own there?

Zinni: Yeah. I mean, the good news was so were the bad guys. I mean, the bad guys were broken down into small units and . . .

Allison: But still, it's sort of a throwback to a different style of warfare. Less technological.

Zinni: Well, what was interesting out there is there was—I was always fascinated by the enemy positions when we found an enemy position. The enemy would come into like these bamboo clumps and would burrow underneath the bamboo and come up and then clear out—because there were these big clumps of all these roots—they'd clear out some of the roots, so it was a ready-made bunker. They would come in and come up underneath the bamboo clumps and roots, which were very thick—you could put artillery on that and not even affect it—and then just clear out some of the root areas and had fields of fire which were very low, and they knew how to get into these areas and organize these clumps. They didn't organize their defensive positions like we did. They didn't put them in a perimeter. They did them in like series of X's so that any approach you made you were getting fire from two sides like walking into a V on the way they did it. So even seeing the enemy's way of doing business was interesting at that point.

Allison: Was this out as part of Operation Billings?

Zinni: [inaudible] . . . overall title for it. We operated out there on and off. Up in that area. Especially if they believed there was some intelligence or there was some activity or a unit infiltrated down from there in some way, then we would go out. And we lived in the villages—the base camps are in the villages on the edge of the jungle.

Allison: As part of Billings?

Zinni: As part of Billings. And so we would go into those villages, set up a camp and basically you would patrol for a week and then come back and rest for a week and then go back out for a week. Roughly a week, sometimes six days, five days; but you needed to

recover, because when you were out there your uniform got ripped up and messed up and some days you didn't get anything to eat and living in the jungle. So when you came back out, you really needed a couple days to rehab.

Allison: That's what what's-his-name said about you. Moriarty. He had some interview on the web, I saw it, that said the first time he met you that "Tony had simply worn out his tiger suit, and I gave him my brand new bottoms." So, that was at [Bon Song] at [Ant Hill].

Zinni: Yes. I guess more so than most because I didn't stay with one unit. See, when the advisors came in, they were assigned to one unit. Each battalion had its own color name tag and you wore that, you were with that battalion. So if that battalion was up in an area for a while then came back to its base camp or came back to Saigon and then went back out, you had a reasonable amount of downtime. But because I was the utility infielder, I never came back. There were only a couple times I got back to Saigon for a few days. But I was always out. I would always be with a unit. If one was coming back, another one's coming out, I would stay with it or I would move to another unit that was short an advisor. So I was spending my whole time out in the bush. So my uniform looked like hell. It was all ripped and torn [inaudible].

Allison: It's kind of hard to get mail that way, too, though.

Zinni: The mail came in sporadically. All of a sudden—the advisor unit was good about trying to get mail to you, but sometimes all of a sudden a month's worth of mail would just arrive. And usually right before you're about to go out on an operation so you had to read all the letters really quick and then burn them.

Allison: Were you able to get mail out?

Zinni: Yes. What you did is you wrote letters and if you had a resupply chopper came in or something they were good about taking some mail back. Or you got it back to the task force once you were in position, they would move it back. And I had some small Instamatic cameras, Kodak cameras. They weren't Instamatic in those days. But I would take the pictures and then send the rolls to Kodak. They would develop them and then send them to my wife. And what my wife would do is, I told her for every person she saw in the picture, make copies because then I'd give them out to the Vietnamese, you know. But I lost a lot of cameras. A lot of them got broken and in the Delta you're neck deep in water going from one place to another.

Allison: Do you still have the photographs?

Zinni: Oh, yeah. I have some.

Allison: I'd like to see those.

Zinni: Okay. You'll see a very skinny Lieutenant Zinni.

Allison: What was your perception of the enemy as far as in combat you're killing the other guy . . .

Zinni: Well, actually, what was unusual about that tour is I actually got to talk to some of the enemy. In one instance we were moving through an area and the point man alerted that we had something coming up; somebody coming up the trail. We put an immediate ambush and we nailed a mailman, literally. He had two security guys and was a guy carrying a big sack, and we killed the two security guys, captured the guy, he was really disciplined. He had all this mail coming from the north and other villages and so we were able to talk to him about everything—he literally walked the Ho Chi Minh trail with all this stuff. And we read all the letters. They were going to the villages in the

areas down in this area we were in. Young officers that were going through military training in the north who were from these villages, people that were fighting that were from these villages and sending letters back to their families, for propaganda newspapers producing . . .

Allison: That's a great intelligence source.

Zinni: One time, and actually we went into a village. This is actually where Moriarty was, up in the mountains up there. We were operating in this area, and I had a woman with a baby came up to our position and starts talking to the company commander and we were around this small village in the mountain, and she brought the baby and the baby had this, the side of his head was just swollen out here. It looked horrible, almost deformed. And she was saying, "My baby needs help." So I called 1st Air Cav and said we've got a woman with a baby with a real problem, I don't know what's wrong, is there any way we can do something for her? So they said, we'll send out a helicopter and we'll take her to the hospital in Quin Nhon to take a look at it. So we talk to her and everything. She got her aunt and her mother and her and the baby and of course the helicopter came in and they got scared. They literally peed in the landing zone
[laughter].

Allison: All of them?

Zinni: Yes. And seeing the helicopter they were scared, and I assured them it'd be all right and they took off. And then about two months later, I'm back in the same village with a different battalion, a different company from a different battalion of Vietnamese Marines. We're back in the same village and the company commander comes up to me and said, "There's a woman here says she knows you." A woman? "Yeah." And here

comes this woman with this baby and she says, “Remember me with my baby?” I said, “Oh, yeah, yeah.” The baby was healthy, looked great. And she was explaining to me that the baby had an abscess, they had to drain the abscess, do all this stuff but they really took care of her, got her back to the village. She said she was thankful and we had saved her baby’s life and all this stuff. And I said great. Then she said, “By the way, I’ll show you where Viet Cong are.”

So I say, tell us where. She says, “There’s a place up here in the side, they’re in tunnels underneath this and I’ll show you where that is.” So we immediately come to dig this up. We go up to the place, surround it and cut off access to it. It turns out to be a regimental aid station and they were in there. They were underground kind of waiting for us to go, I guess. We get them all out and they’re all our equivalent to Corpsmen and doctors. So our battalion doctor comes up and—a Vietnamese doctor—and the head doctor for this aid station, this regimental aid station, went to medical school with him in France. So they were old buddies [inaudible]. We got all the doctors and medical staff around, they brought out food and we sat around the table and talked. They were reliving old times and they were telling us about what was life like on their side, what they were doing. So we spent about half a day shooting the bull with them, eating, and they cuffed them and took them away [*laughter*]. But there were other times. There was a time we dug out a lieutenant and his aide out of a, they were in a dried up rice paddy on the back end of a tunnel. We heard something in there and talked him out. He came out. He’s in his starched khaki uniform. He looked at me and he called the one troop to attention and he saluted me and all the Vietnamese Marines got a big kick out of that. I saluted back and talked to him for a while. So you did get a chance to talk

to—to really get an idea of who the enemy was. At one point in time we went into a village and we killed an officer, as we were coming over the side of this small rise, we saw a group around a fire. There was a family and there were two AK47s and two young men there. And as soon as they saw us they grabbed their AK47s and began to move away from the family and we got into this firefight with them. We killed them both. And we got down in there and got their—this guy that died was a platoon commander. He was a platoon commander with the NVA. He was from this village going to school in the north to their academy and they were operating in the area so he took some leave to come into the village. This was his family and he was eating breakfast with them. And the other guy was like his batman. And so we unfortunately killed him in front of his family in the fight. And he has this diary describing his platoon and the food and where they were and everything else. And so here we are with their family and they'd just seen him at breakfast and killing him and going through the diary and looking at this young guy with his son on his knee and all. So you get those kind of moments, too. We had a probe from an NVA unit one night. The Vietnamese Marines, as I was saying, were really good about not exposing their crew-served weapons until you fired the final protective fires. And we had this probe one night, and you could tell when they were like NVA or really good units. There would be these probes and the probes are obviously designed to get you to fire and expose your heavy weapons. And the regional forces, the popular forces, the ARVN will do that, but the Marine NCOs were really good about not doing it. And on this one sort of point near this bridge this Vietnamese Marine sergeant had a squad on the bridge. And as the probes were coming the company commander was saying, this is one of our best

sergeants, he won't fall for it. And what he would do, they would hear it out there, and if he had a sense of where it was he would just take one shot with his rifle. Pop. Pop. And they finally withdrew. But when first light hit, there was an NVA soldier on a wire and he was hanging there. He was shot and was killed. So we went out there and they were really praising the sergeant because, obviously, their job was, they were sappers and they were trying to get through and they were trying to get us to expose the heavy weapons and trying to get through the wire and he was smart enough to do this. So we take the guy off the wire and take him down and he had a book of poetry he wrote. He had a diary and he had poems he wrote in his diary. He had been wounded and he was a sergeant, he was a squad leader and it was all about life in the NVA and then the poetry he wrote and everything. So we would sit and read that. So, because you're with the Vietnamese, you had maybe a sense of the enemy and a connection and a contact with the enemy you wouldn't have normally had.

Allison: Especially if you were with an American unit. You hear so much about Vietnam how there was this real, what they call the [One Gook Rule], have you heard of that? And all this and it was just this . . .

Zinni: I think you have to respect your enemy. You don't have to like them, you have to respect their capabilities.

Allison: Dehumanization.

Zinni: You can't lose respect for his ability to do you harm. And you also have to understand that, in some cases, there is a human side to the enemy. Because understanding your enemy totally makes you better at what you do. It's not a weakness to understand the enemy. I mean, you're trying to understand what the enemy's trying to do and how they

think and why he thinks the way he thinks. And I think if you don't have that kind of full understanding, you can lose it. My impression of most of the enemy that I had contact with and talked to and everything else is they were highly propagandized. I mean, obviously we know that every unit had a political officer and all that, but I read one letter one time, it was from a soldier fighting with the NVA and he sent a letter back home to his village. His village was up in II Corps where there were a lot of people from this area who had gone off to fight with the NVA or the mainline Viet Cong because it was an area that, as I said, Ho Chi Minh left a cadre behind. And he said, we are winning many battles, we have killed thousands of Americans. Obviously, not true. And they're great, glorious victories. I hope everybody there is fighting harder and everything else. And then the last line was "Please send rice, we are starving." It was so inconsistent. It was laughable when you looked at it. But, they were believing their own propaganda.

Allison: Was there this fanaticism about it? Did you pick up and take this Communist fanaticism I've heard about that it was almost a religion for them? You didn't get that?

Zinni: I don't think it was a fanaticism. I think it was more like a determination.

Allison: Were they Communists though? Or were they fighting—were they nationalist?

Zinni: I think they would've recited to you all the Communist propaganda. They were brainwashed. It was instilled in them. This was a struggle. They had to do better. Their life could be better.

Allison: And Communism was it?

Zinni: Well, Communism was it because there didn't seem to be any alternatives that matched it. But more importantly, back to the point, this was drilled into their skulls. I mean,

they were propagandized from God knows when. From when they were born, because they grew up in an era of Ho Chi Minh and Communism and everything else. And an important part, this is why I say you've got to understand the enemy, it wasn't a matter of just come join us and fight. They had to be mentally conditioned, politically conditioned. That's why—I mean, this is Mao doctrine—that's why the political officers had to be there. What you have to do is brainwash them to the point where they will do all this and believe it's better. And my sense was they always believed "I'm not doing enough." They're winning in the north, they're winning in the south, but here, we're not doing enough. Even though they weren't winning in the north or south, they were led to believe that they needed to struggle and fight harder. They were committed. This is better for the people. You're the people's warrior, you're doing this, you're loved amongst the people. The way of life we're going to have, you're going to share in the glory and you are the hero of the—that was the belief system and there wasn't anything challenging it. They were doing a better job with the hearts and minds. Now, their approach to the hearts and minds was propaganda and brainwashing and we weren't offering an alternative way to think about this.

Allison: Information operations.

Zinni: Yes.

Allison: They had a good information operation.

Zinni: [inaudible] . . . culture. And the South Vietnamese government just wasn't as responsive, maybe didn't see the need. I don't know. It just never struck me—I could never figure out where they were headed with this. The government was very corrupt. It tended to be a military government. I remember one instance where the Vietnamese

Marines had just won a big fight, and I think it was Ky that came down and congratulated the commander and started reaching back and handing bundles of something over. And I didn't know what those bundles were. Money.

Allison: *[laughter]* You're fighting for money.

Zinni: You don't fight for money. I mean I understand that some of the money you can put toward—they had to take care of their own base camps and the family housing and all that sort of stuff. But that's not what you do with a donation. You put streamers on the colors. But it was a different culture.

[overlapping dialogue; inaudible]

Allison: The honor, the valor, it cheapens it.

Zinni: And I will say this for the Vietnamese Marines. They were much like our Marine Corps. They did not give away medals. You had to earn a medal. Where you looked at the other side, the ARVN, they threw medals at all their troops that they devalued the sense of it. The Vietnamese Marines, if you saw a Vietnamese Marine with a personal award, that guy went through hell to get it.

Allison: You hear a lot about why men fight in combat. When you get in combat, what keeps someone there in a firefight instead of leaving that perilous situation? And you hear about this concept that's band of brothers among Americans. Was it the same thing with them?

Zinni: Yes, I think it was the same with them as I saw as a company commander. Especially when I went back as a company commander, it was 1970 and we were beginning to pull out. It was clear to everybody there that there was no love for the military back home, and they weren't going to be treated as heroes. And yet I watched the U.S. Marines that

were in my company, the heroism and the fight, and you can only come to one conclusion: they do it for each other and they do it for the unit. I mean, there's a degree of unit pride, this is who they are and these are their buddies. They're going to be judged by their buddies. They've got to—this is their family. This is who they're living and dying with. And I think, in the end, that's what people fight for. I mean they don't, they aren't in the middle of this firefight beginning to think wonderful, lofty, patriotic thoughts. They're not fighting for democracy and free-market economies and all this other business. They're fighting for the guy next to them. There's a degree, I think, of unit value and cohesion that draws them together and there's pride in that that makes them want to do their duty under that stress. That's what they joined for, that's what they want to be sure they live up to.

Allison: Was it the same thing with the Vietnamese Marines then?

Zinni: Yes, yes. The Vietnamese Marines, the one thing I had to be careful with is, they were fatalists. They believed their—there was a saying that they're polite and they make any acquaintance and they will be very open with you, but they're very reluctant to declare you a friend. In other words, they're very open, they make acquaintances easily, they're very easy to talk to, very easy to like, but they don't give away friendships very easily. To be truly close to say I am your friend and you're my friend, has a big meaning and it's something that doesn't come cheaply. And I realized why that is, I had an experience one time where a company commander lost one of his staff NCOs, a senior staff NCO, the equivalent of like a gunny in the Marine Corps. But this guy had been in this guy's company forever. He was killed and I watched this company commander go into deep depression. And he was a great company commander, and I was trying to

understand what was happening. I know you lost a troop, you lose somebody that's with you, but this guy was more than that. And as I was talking to some of the other officers, they said, "Well, his fate's intertwined with him." And when you have a friend or when you're close to somebody, they believe their fates are intertwined. So whatever happened to that person will happen to you, pretty quickly. So if he dies, you're going to die. So when you link in that friendship, you're committed to these interlocking fates. The other thing I saw, too, is because I did virtually all the medevacs, is they would go into shock easily. They'd sort of resign themselves because they were very fatalistic. The first time, what shocked me is, I was medevacing some wounded and there was a Vietnamese NCO that was helping me with the medevac. He had been shot in the side, but it was a very small wound. And he was actually helping me get the medevacs in and everything and when the choppers took off, we took him out, he was waving to me, and he died on the way back.

Allison: Even though it was a minor wound?

Zinni: It was a minor wound and when I asked about, called back, they said, "Well, he went into shock." And I said, "What do you mean went in to shock? What is shock?" So I began to realize I could detect shock. Their eyes would begin to glaze and they would almost get like a grey, a greenish-grey like pallor and they would begin to just sort of check off the net. It was just sort of like I'm going to accept my fate.

Allison: It was almost a will of their own.

Zinni: I realized that you had to get them out right away, but you had to talk through them, you had to stay on them, say, "You're not going to die. You're not going to die." The other thing that got me about medevacs is I medevaced people who I thought this guy's

not going to make it. He is one millimeter away from death and he survives. And we medevac people that walk onto the helicopter and look great and then die on the way back. I mean there was no rhyme or reason to that. But I really found the Vietnamese Marines, there was this sense of fatalism, with the Vietnamese. It hit home to me when I was a company commander my “Kit Carson” scout was wounded when I was wounded. And I was in the Army evac hospital in Da Nang and I had come out from surgery and everything else and they came up to me and said, “You know, your Kit Carson scout was wounded in the shoulder with a serious wound but not anything life-threatening. We’re losing him.” He was just sort of checking off the net. And I knew right way. I said, can you—they kept the Vietnamese in a different ward, but I said, “Is it possible to get him here next to me in the bed?” And he said, “Well, I guess we can do that.” I said, “I need to have him here.” And brought him over here and I had to talk to him. I had to say, “You’re okay. You’re going to be okay. You’re going to live. You’re not going to die. Don’t give up on this.” And he would struggle through. Finally his family came in and then we got him out of it. But I knew right away because I’d experienced that with the Vietnamese Marines.

Allison: Do you think that plus their view of friendship was somehow based in their religion, Buddhism?

Zinni: Well, yes, they were all different religions. There were Catholics. There were Buddhists. There were Taoist. There were nonreligious people in the organization. But I think you have to understand what these guys have been through. They hadn’t seen one year of combat. These guys have seen, in some cases, decades worth and at least a decade. And if you talk about an NCO or an officer above lieutenant, they had seen years of this

stuff. They had watched friends die, classmates die, their troops die, how many times? I always think about a company commander that probably—and their company tours were not like one year as a company commander. They were company commander for years. But you would think about how many troops were there from where they started to what they ended up with and how many replacements and new guys and watching them come and getting close to them, watching their fellow captains and lieutenants die. And the troops were very close to their officers in the vast majority of cases. I remember a young lieutenant that was really a great lieutenant and he was killed in an operation. And we had his body ready for evacuation. It was in a poncho and it was in this landing zone and his whole unit came over, his platoon, and walked by his body.

Allison: Like a wake or a funeral.

Zinni: Yes, a sign of respect for the lieutenant. So it's much different. The length of time, what they saw, they were invested in this. This is their culture. They knew there was no place to go home to. This was it.

Allison: Did they think the Americans would leave them, abandon them?

Zinni: No, I think . . .

Allison: There wasn't any idea about that?

Zinni: Not when I—certainly when I was there they didn't think we were going to abandon them. They really liked us, they were very appreciative of what the Americans did. I think they thought that the Americans were their salvation in the end. That's how they were going to survive.

Allison: You did get the Bronze Star in that tour, right?

Zinni: Yes. Bronze Star, Navy Commendation.

Allison: And Navy Commendation.

Zinni: A Vietnamese award.

Allison: What was the overall impact on your career, do you think, if you could encapsulate that?

Zinni: I probably would not have stayed in the Marine Corps.

Allison: Without that advisor tour?

Zinni: Well I think Vietnam—when I joined the Marine Corps, there was no Vietnam. I actually went off to Basic School; there was no Vietnam. But more than anything else, now, I was invested in this war in a very different way. Not just in terms of a place you go with American units and fight. I now saw this war for the people. I really wanted this to work out for them. I was really hoping that somehow Vietnam would get a responsible government that the people would have something to fight for, that the horror they went through in their daily lives wouldn't happen, this thing could get itself resolved in a way where they could live peacefully. When you went throughout the Vietnamese countryside and you went into villages, they were peaceful little villages. I'd go into the villages. I was always amazed at the respect they showed for their elders. I was in one little village and everybody was excited in the village. The kids were all excited, and I asked the village chief what's happening. He said, "Oh, we've got a special visitor coming from the next village is coming over." And I thought, "Oh, somebody important, a government official is he?" "No, no," he looked at me kind of strange. Then finally, down the trail comes this guy who I swear looked like Ho Chi Minh. He was an old Vietnamese with a grey beard. The kids swarmed him like he was a rock star. And I met the guy and talked to him. So I said to the village chief kind of

what's special about him? He says, "He's a very old man." And basically what the company commander was helping me understand is the value in age and wisdom and seniority that is so respected. Here I thought, we don't have that in our culture. Put them away in a home somewhere *[laughter]*.

Allison: Get them out of sight.

Zinni: But this guy was everything to them.

Allison: Interesting. Well there's a lot of cultural differences, no doubt about it. Well, I've gone through most of my questions. I can talk a long time about this stuff, but why don't we cut it off here.

End of Session II

UNITED STATES MARINE CORPS HISTORY DIVISION
Oral History Interview

Interviewee: General Anthony C. Zinni
Date: 9 March 2007
Length: 1:37:40
Interviewer: Dr. Fred H. Allison

SESSION III

Allison: This is the third session of the interview with General Tony Zinni. Today's date is the 9th of March 2007. We're at Command and Staff College. Good morning, sir.

Zinni: Morning.

Allison: Like I was saying, we did cover your advisor tour well. There was a lot of great information there. Just a couple of things that I wanted to maybe follow up on and get a little more information. How much did the South Vietnamese Marine Corps get involved in civic action?

Zinni: They didn't very much. As a matter of fact, when I was there in 1967, we started to get them more involved. They were very reluctant. They saw themselves as combat troops and they really didn't feel that that was their mission. But, when we were in II Corps, we ended up in an area that was heavily Communist. There was a big push to do more work with the people. Because it was an area that had a lot of Viet Cong, they wanted the Vietnamese Marines to be involved. The Vietnamese Marines did it. We set up some county fairs [operations] and did a lot of work with the people, MedCaps [medical civic action] and that sort of thing. And as they did more of it, they really got to like it. I think for the Vietnamese Marine troops, it was like being back home in their own villages, and they came from all over Vietnam. But, they began to help with the rice harvest. They began to work with the people. And, they ran the county fairs, in

many cases with U.S. support. The U.S. Army would send in medical units, dental units. The South Vietnamese government and the local district governments would send people down to do ID cards and check on people and sort of register them. Things like this were done. There was a place where you talked to people, really collecting intelligence. In the next place, they got something, either medical or dental care or something else, revolutionary development cadres that used to come down from Saigon to work with them. People in the CORDS [Civil Operations and Rural Development Support] program that would help build or construct or invest in whatever the local agriculture or business was. Mostly it was agriculture in the area. They would try to help them by building animal shelters and that sort of thing. So, they began to see the value in all of that, as we did more and more of that. I don't think they saw themselves as doing that regularly. But, I think that experience sort of opened their eyes to more of the hearts and minds business. You know, not that they thought there was anything wrong with it before. They just felt, "Hey, we're elite combat troops. This is what we do." And, I think they got an appreciation for the hearts and minds stuff much more.

Allison: Yes. Okay. How did they impress you in the way they handled enemy prisoners?

Zinni: Well, they were tough. And, in 1967 when I was there, there were issues about prisoner abuses, not with the Vietnamese Marines alone, but with ARVN, the military force in South Vietnam. And we began as advisors, to get more pressure about this. They had come out with regulations that said the advisors would be held accountable for what their units might do.

Allison: So, they were held accountable?

Zinni: Yes. We didn't have any command authority. So, we had to convey that to them first of all. It just didn't make sense to abuse prisoners because you don't really get any information. In my experience, with the prisoners that I was involved with is they tell you everything. They don't have the kind of code of conduct that we did. Many of them that I heard from, especially the officers that were prisoners, said that they were under no obligation not to tell it. Because, if you were missing or captured, they assumed that everything you knew was compromised. So, there was no pressure. So, I didn't find most of the prisoners reluctant. Sometimes you found a really hard case that just was defiant. You know. But, most of the times the prisoners were pretty open to what degree you can trust or what their information might be. But, there were times when I worried about the welfare of the prisoners.

Allison: There were stories that they were pretty tough on the Vietnamese.

Zinni: They were tough. What I found is that it depended on the circumstances in which they took the prisoner. They basically did everything by the book. As advisors, what we tried to do is right away when we took prisoners, report back up the chain that we had prisoners, so that there would be immediate pressure coming down to get them back up and into the system. We would try to get them out of there as soon as possible. So, we avoided any problems. Sometimes though, if it were a particularly tough fight and particularly if the enemy was responsible for abuses, you could have a problem. Let's say for example that you were in a village where the Viet Cong had abused the villagers. We were in places where they put booby traps in villager's homes. Like, when we were in II Corps, I explained about the county fair and all. The Viet Cong had put out the word that if you cooperate in this we'll punish you. Well, the people

had no choice. They were going to be registered. They were going to be moved through it. When they went back to their homes, they were booby-trapped. We had examples of kids and old people being blown up. Under those circumstances, the Vietnamese Marines, if they took prisoners responsible for that, you could have a problem. And again, I had to convey to the one who handled all of the prisoners—and I had to convey to him that it was inappropriate and that I was to be held responsible. And I put a lot of pressure to get them out. That seemed to be the best way. Just get them out.

Allison: So, you sort of preempted it by staying out of it?

Zinni: Yes. Yes. They listened to the advisors. I think that the advisors had a lot of clout and a lot of respect and they weren't going to do something that the advisors told them they shouldn't do. They would basically accept it. And, so I think the problem was there. And sometimes in the heat of battle, when prisoners were taken right away, you could see that something could happen, would happen. So, you had to move pretty quickly to get them out of the way and move them out. So, it could be problematic. They didn't have the same standards we did. Sometimes, maybe their emotions or what had happened in battle and what they saw on the ground could affect their decision making.

Allison: Yes. That's understandable in a situation like that. Did you have any opportunity to meet General [John] Chaisson while you were there?

Zinni: I didn't meet him while I was there. But, I meet him later at Headquarters, when he was chief of staff. I was there at the same time. But, he was a very respected general. We always thought he was a brilliant general. Obviously, his unfortunate untimely

death was sad. But, he was respected throughout the Marine Corps as a brilliant general. He was down in MACV [Military Assistance Command, Vietnam] while I was there.

Allison: Right. He was a senior Marine there at MACV.

Zinni: Yes and highly respected by the MACV people. By reputation I knew that. Of course, I was way down the chain.

Allison: I just thought you might have come across him or you might have made an impression. I didn't know about an untimely death that he had though.

Zinni: Well, he suffered a heart attack, as I understood it. It was at Headquarters.

Allison: Okay. All right, sir. Anything else on the advisor thing that we haven't covered?

Zinni: No. I think we have it.

Allison: Is there something you would like to reemphasize?

Zinni: No. I think we have it. It was a great experience. The Vietnamese Marines were superb. Like I said, superb light infantry and I just learned so much by the whole experience and by being with them.

Allison: Of course, you got very sick. You got very sick and you lost a tremendous amount to weight.

Zinni: It was the fate of the advisors. I don't think there was an advisor that went through that didn't have chronic dysentery. The diet, the amount of time you spent out in the bush, especially in my case because I stayed out there, unlike the others who were with the units or their units rotated back into rest areas or something. But, I tended to stay out. So, it maybe affected me more so than most advisors. Although other advisors had the same problems. I knew I had this chronic dysentery and I'd lost a lot of weight. But,

we were up in II Corps at the beginning of the Tet offensive operating up in that area. I began to have a lot of difficulty sleeping. I got very weak. My urine started to get darker and darker, I noticed. The Vietnamese doctor with our battalion had given me a couple of shots. And I'm not so sure what he gave me a shot of. But, we were operating in II Corps and I was with a company of Vietnamese Marines. I began to realize that I had more than just the chronic dysentery. I decided or I saw that where we were moving was just a few kilometers away from LZ English. What the 1st Air Cav had out there. They were really logistics bases. They were located up on mountaintops and secured, and they had these series of logistics bases and this LZ English was one they had there for a long time and it was a big logistics base. So, I told the Vietnamese company commander that if we could just, with the patrol that we were taking out, just swing by there. I wanted to go up there and just see if maybe an American doctor could maybe give some advice. So, we approached the lines up there and of course here we were. We were all in tiger stripes and our berets and weapons, and we're out on patrols. Well, of course the soldiers stopped us and didn't know who we were and were worried about . . .

Allison: These are American soldiers?

Zinni: These are American soldiers who wanted to know what we were. So, I went up to the lines and I told them that I was an American and he looked at me. And, of course, on my uniform it had U.S. Marines on one pocket opposite the name tag. For those soldiers, they were like, "There are no Marines out here," and "Who are you?" And I kept saying, "Well, I'm an American, an American officer. I just want to come in to

your sickbay.” He looked at me really strangely. Of course, what I had to realize was that I had lost a lot of weight. I was down to about 123 pounds.

Allison: Is that right?

Zinni: I was the same size as the Vietnamese. But, I’ve had hepatitis and malaria and I was very yellow or pale. They weren’t sure if I was American or Vietnamese. So, they took me under guard to the sickbay. The doctor looked at me and he said, “Stop. Stop right where you are.” He handed me a urine sample cup and he said, “P—s in this cup.” And I did. It was black as coffee. He said, “Stop what you are doing. We’ve got to get you out of here right away.” He said, “If you are an American . . .” I remember that *[laughter]*. I thought, “I am an American!” *[laughter]* Then, he said, “Well, you’ve got to get out of here.” So, I said, “Well, I can’t get out of here.” We were on an operation with the Vietnamese. You know. We had just finished this big battle and obviously something big was happening. It was before everything had happened down in Saigon and that offensive—it was big. But, we were beginning to sense that there were some big units moving, and we had made the first battle of that offensive. So, I said, “Just give me something and let me go because I’m staying with my unit.” And, the doctor looked at me and said, “Let me make this clear, if we don’t evacuate you now, then you’re going to die. I can’t make it any clearer than that.” I said, “Well, that’s pretty clear.” So, I thought that maybe I was just going to go back to a hospital and spend a few days or whatever. So, I gave all of my equipment to the Vietnamese company commander that was there and told him to take it back and give it to the advisors. At that time, I was carrying a “grease gun” and I had a bunch of other things too, maps and stuff. So, they evacuated me out to the hospital. When I got there, I just

felt tremendously weak. I was probably operating on my last bit of adrenaline or whatever was keeping me going. But, I got the hospital and I almost collapsed. They ran all of these tests on me. I couldn't eat anything. I couldn't hold any food down. I couldn't do anything. The doctor came in and said, "You have hepatitis. You have dysentery. You have mono. And it looks like you may have malaria too." It was all four. So, I said, "What are you going to do to get me back and going?" He says, "You're going back home. You can't stay here." So, I went for a few weeks to Qui Nhon. I went to Guam. I spent about a month in Guam. Basically, there's nothing they could really do for you, except try to build you back up. They want you to eat all of the time. They were constantly coming in and offering me all kinds of foods. "Do you want a hamburger? Do you want French fries? What do you want?" I mean, constantly, they were giving me food.

Eventually, I was evacuated back through the system, a whole series of hospitals—West Coast, East Coast. Made it back to Philadelphia because the Philadelphia Naval Hospital is the closest to my home. I was an outpatient there for a couple of months. I was assigned to the Marine Barracks in Philadelphia, just for a short time; I would say about two months. I worked in their casualty assistance. I never got a casualty call. The way it works is they try to match up the casualties that came in. All of the casualties whose homes were east of the Mississippi came into Dover, Delaware, and Philadelphia assigned an escort. So, what we had was we had one of everything, in grade and rank and ethnicity, and race, and that sort of thing. So, if you had a black lance corporal from New York, we pretty much matched him up with a black lance corporal from New York. Had there been an officer from that

region, I would have matched up with them. But, it never happened. So, I did some work with the legal department there. There were a couple of court-martials and other things that I sat on. Eventually, I went down to Quantico. I really wanted to get back to Basic School. I really felt that my experiences were very unique. I really wanted to do something to teach about what I had learned because I thought that it was so unique and different. One of the advisors knew some of the people at TBS. The instructors, the senior instructors, or they were called the “group heads” then, tactics groups and others. So, they put in a word.

Allison: One of the advisors?

Zinni: Yes. One of the advisors had known the tactics group chief, called him up, and said, “He’d like to come down there.” So, I got orders, then, down to Basic School.

Allison: Quick before we get into your time at TBS, which was important. Just a side question here. Did your system have a hard time adapting to American food?

Zinni: Yes. I had a really difficult time. I mean, my strength started to build up. But, what I found was that it was really difficult to build back up endurance. I mean, years it took before I could function normally. I had all of that. But, it took years to have that kind of endurance. It just sort of zapped me. I would say it took a couple of years. Probably all through the two years I was at Basic School. It took all of that before I felt that I was reasonably back to normal.

Allison: I’m thinking about a passage from a book *Shogun*, where the guy is living with the Japanese for a long time, and then he goes back and he eats roast beef and he puked. It was because his stomach couldn’t handle that rich food.

Zinni: It was interesting because the few times I got back to Saigon, one of the things we would do is there was a restaurant called La Cave. It was a French restaurant in Saigon. We would rush over there and order a steak and a lobster and all of this stuff to eat. It was American food because you'd had all of this Vietnamese food or worse in the jungle and everything else. And we would all get sick, just like that. The food was too rich and your system can't take it. It didn't take really long. But, I would say it took a couple of months to not have that, either get sick and throw up or have that nauseous feeling, to go away.

Allison: Now, you went to the Philadelphia hospital?

Zinni: Yes.

Allison: That's interesting how they try to facilitate getting wounded and sick personnel back to an area where they were close to their family, or was that just coincidental.

Zinni: No, that's what they tried to do. If you were, in effect, an outpatient, they would try to get you to the hospital closest to your family, with the exception that if you had a serious injury, you have to go to a specialist hospital. Now, Philadelphia specialized in two things, amputees and psychological problems. Although I was on the ward with the outpatients, just being located close to home, you saw a preponderance of—in the other wards were the psychiatric problems and the amputees; especially with the amputees, when you are in the hospital and of course I was checking in and out for outpatient care, seeing all of the amputees. And I was medevaced back with a number of amputees too. That really was tough. And, the other part was the psychological problems too. They were either direct brain injuries or some sort of mental issues. But, those were the two worst kinds of casualties to experience, with all that they went

through and to be out there with them. That was what Philadelphia Naval Hospital specialized in at the time.

Allison: So, I guess you got to see your family and what not while you were there?

Zinni: Yes. The first time I was released from the hospital, my brother came to pick me up and it was at night. We were driving down the expressway, out in Philadelphia where my home is, and I suddenly started into a deep sweat. I turned to my brother and I said, “You can’t be driving out here at night.” He looked at me like I was strange and I thought, “Jeez, what’d I just say.” You know. But, just being out there at night . . .

Allison: You were just being practical.

Zinni: Right. I was thinking that you were going out into the night and into the dark. It was the first time, really, that I had done that. I was really in the hospital the whole time, and hospitals and medevac planes and everything else. So, and even at Basic School, in the beginning, when we would go out on some of the field exercises—when I got to Basic School, I was in counterinsurgency scouting and patrolling section. We were out with patrols. We’d be out there and then the blanks would start firing and everything else. Your first reaction was—you had the sense that you were back in that environment and you almost wanted to—I think a couple of times I might of shouted a few instructions at them instead of letting them run the patrol or whatever. So, it took a while to kind of get back into that groove and get over that, because, you’ve just spent almost a year in that kind of mind-set.

Allison: Did you have anything like PTSD or something that? Any nightmares or anything after that tour?

Zinni: No, nothing like that. As a matter of fact, I would say, despite obviously you see a lot of horror. It's war and you experience that. It was such an overwhelming and unique experience. My association with the Vietnamese—at Basic School there were Vietnamese Marines who I knew. Lieutenants coming through and my battalion commander Colonel Tri, it was Major Tri then—he had come back as a student. So, I had a lot of Vietnamese Marines here. I really felt—I loved the job I had at Basic School. I loved teaching counterinsurgency. We ran the Vietnamese Village operations. Because of the unique experiences I had with riverine operations and with the South Vietnamese, I taught some unique classes in there. There was the scouting and patrolling part, I really loved that and I really felt that I learned a lot with the Vietnamese Marines because of their field craft and the way they operated and their experience. It was much different than the experiences you picked up in the U.S. Marine or Army units. So, there were a lot of techniques and tactics and things that I felt were different and added to it.

Allison: So, you were able to implement some innovative things into the curriculum there?

Zinni: Yes. When I first [was] in there, I worked with some great Marines. [Patrick G.] “Paddy” Collins and a number of others that were kind of legendary Marines and had a lot of combat experience. When I came in with my ideas and my thoughts, the great thing was that everybody was really receptive. They wanted, so much, to make sure—especially in that section. You know, this is a new area. We're into things, dealing with counterinsurgency and other things. We really need to use everybody's experiences. If they've been unique and have new ideas, they really welcomed thoughts and ideas. We would sit around and think about ways we would design the

field exercises that we wanted to do. We would design the classes. I guess because I worked for people that were really open to new ideas and wanted to try things. When they realized that my experiences were different from the others, they really wanted to incorporate those into the curriculum. That made it even better to be there.

Allison: Okay. Who was running that? Who did you work for?

Zinni: I worked for the Major Paddy Collins. After he left that, he went back to Vietnam and then Major Jim Riley. Then, eventually, I become the head of that section.

Counterinsurgency, scouting, and patrolling. In between which, I did one shot—what we call downstairs because the instructors were upstairs at the Basic School. I did one shot as a platoon commander and executive officer, as an SPC [student platoon commander]. I was XO of one of the student companies and then I was a platoon commander for about half. That's when they needed somebody to come up and take the head of that section. It was a major's billet but they didn't have any majors. Since I had over a year of teaching up there, they took me out of the platoon and brought me up to be the head of the Scouting and Patrolling Counterinsurgency Section.

Allison: Do you remember any students that stand out in your mind? That you had dealings with at that time?

Zinni: All of the students that came through in 1967, many of whom I had met before, I mean 1968 and 1969. Strangely enough, when I went back to Vietnam as a company commander, all of my platoon commanders had been at Basic School when I was an instructor. You know. Here comes your instructor. He's the company commander. But, it actually made it easier, because they knew what I was going to demand of them. We were going to do things by the book. So, you made a lot of connections

there. In the section with me was Ollie North. He had joined just before I left. I did six months at AWS. In those days it was Amphibious Warfare School for six months, before I went back to Vietnam. I felt really well prepared. The first experience in Vietnam. Teaching it and being around others who had the experience with the Marines in the north. They were really people that knew their stuff when it came to tactics and weapons and things. And then, doing the AWS course before going back. I mean, I couldn't think of a better set of experiences preparing me to be company commander.

Allison: What kind of impression did North make on you?

Zinni: I was pretty short and ready to leave. He was a very bright, young lieutenant. He was very enthusiastic and was great in a classroom. He had a great way of teaching. He was motivated and enthusiastic. The lieutenants really took to him. He liked the teaching and instructing part a lot. He was impressive from that view. At that stage, normally, they would have been captains. But, we were now getting first lieutenants back from Vietnam because we had a shortage of officers and ranks. So, lieutenants were going in as instructors and he was one of them.

Allison: Did you have a student named Mike Hagee?

Zinni: Yes. Well, a lot of the students that came through in different companies were there. Mike Hagee was one.

Allison: Was there anything memorable about him?

Zinni: No. You know. Lieutenants were lieutenants. Other than the lieutenants in my platoon, I saw some of them when I went back to Vietnam. You don't remember the

lieutenants particularly as lieutenants. Later on in life, when you get to know them and obviously they say, "You were an instructor of mine."

Allison: They remember you. You don't necessarily remember them so well. Ken Estes?

Zinni: Yes.

Allison: Dick Camp I think was an instructor out there too. Wasn't he?

Zinni: Yes. He was an instructor out there. We were out there.

Allison: Ken Estes was a student. He's doing some stuff for us over in the History Division. He wanted to come over and say hi to you or maybe sit in on an interview.

Zinni: Certainly. Yes. But, the instructors were phenomenal there. It was truly a group of quality people there. The Van Riper brothers were there as platoon commanders when I was there. I mean, there were all sorts of people that became significant parts of the Marine Corps and household names.

Allison: Well, that time period when you talk about Ollie North and Jim Webb's coming through.

Zinni: That was after I left. When I went to a battalion, Webb had recently left. Webb was legendary in 1/5. The Marines talked about him. The officers talked about him. That's where I first heard his name because I didn't know him at Quantico because he came in after I left. But I'll tell you, in 1/5 he had a fantastic reputation.

Allison: Okay, sir. In there, you get a one-year extension.

Zinni: What they had said was in order to go to the Basic School, I needed a one-year extension. I agreed to the extension. I really wasn't thinking about staying in or not staying in. I had become so immersed in the war. When I first came into the Marine Corps, of course, Vietnam wasn't coming up or anything, when I first was

commissioned. I really thought I would just do my three years and then get out. Then, of course, Vietnam and the advisory unit and everything that happened.

I was really immersed in this, and I wasn't really even thinking about it. So, I agreed to the one-year extension because I wanted to go back to Basic School. I didn't even think about the extension. The extension was coming up. I kept getting the adjutant from the Basic School that said, "You know. You've got to do something now. You've got to augment. You've got to do something." I said, "Yes. Yes. Yes. I'll augment. You know. I was busy teaching. I wasn't even thinking about it pretty clearly, about what to do. Then one day, he comes out. We were on a range or I was out on a patrol or something. He came out with the papers for augmentation and says, "You've got to do this or you're going to be . . ."

Allison: You won't be around here! *[laughter]*

Zinni: And I said, "Okay. Give me those papers." I just signed them. I don't know. Whatever it was. I don't know if it was a submission to the board or whatever. But, he said, "You've got to do this to augment." In those days, you fogged a mirror you were augmented. So, I was augmented.

Allison: So, you got augmented the next year, in 1970?

Zinni: Yes.

Allison: And then you go to AWS [Amphibious Warfare School]. You talked about that a little bit. But, how did that—I mean, you're an experienced combat veteran. What did you think of the worth of that for your professional well-being?

Zinni: Well, it was extremely valuable from a couple points of view. First of all, everybody in the class was a combat vet by then. So, we had that in common. They had

suspended aviators from going to AWS because of the need for them in Vietnam. So, in our class we had just aviators. There were just very few ground officers and very few infantrymen.

Allison: So, for these guys, this is their first course with a real Marine Corps school?

Zinni: Yes, and these were aviators that were much senior to us in many cases. They were senior majors, you know, but we were junior captains. But, in order to catch up, this was the first class that the aviators got in for a number of years because of Vietnam, and now they were in big numbers. That was a good part of this. You really weren't exposed to Marine aviation that much. So now, here you're in a class of helicopter pilots, fixed-wing pilots. Their Vietnam War experience really was brought home to the class because it dominates. Then you're in there with brother ground officers and infantry officers and others that have had different experiences. I was there with Mike Byron, later general, and a number of others. And, as you know, they were captains all at the same time. So, that level of experience was just—the instruction at AWS was superb. The quality of the staff was exceptional. The international officers. Again, we had Vietnamese Marines and Navy and from all over. To me, it was a fantastic learning experience. Just now for the first time, I'm really beginning to—not only the tactics and other things that were up from what you're used to—but, the staff functions now were really beginning to get understood by us, and we were exposed to the planning of amphibious operations. You're really beginning to see what the battalion S-3s and other staff officers do that you, as a company grade officer, didn't have that exposure to.

Allison: Was there any friction or anything like that between ground and aviation officers?

Zinni: No.

Allison: Everybody understood aviation is here to support the ground.

Zinni: I think it added for us because most of us on the ground side, this was our first real exposure to aviation other than maybe a broad academic sense that you get at the Basic School . . . listening to their side of the war was. Especially the fixed-wing, I'd called them in. I don't think I'd ever called in Marine Air. My first tour, I called in the Air Force air and the helicopter business, too. Some of the pilots there were on their third and fourth tours. They had gone, even during the advisory effort, before we had large ground units, they were in support of the Vietnamese with the helicopter support. That whole aviation side was great to bring in and understand, too. I only saw, maybe the receiving end. I mean, I knew how to call in [air]. I had learned that. I was an advisor, but I had not gone through the aviator's point of view about how all of this gets done and works and really, from their point of view, what happens on the ground. So, it was kind of a great piece to put in place for what you saw as the end result.

Allison: I'm sure the aviators were saying the same thing. They were learning a great deal from the ground officers. This was the first experience they had had with their contemporary ground officers.

Zinni: Yes. I think in many respects it was. And of course, this close association that we are proud of in the Marine Corps with aviation and ground and that we come together and put it together. You know, it was just another brick in the foundation of learning about the military. It, of course, helps you when you go back. You have a much better sense of how things are put together at another level. You're not just looking at the effect end of things. You're beginning to see how the process works.

Allison: Yes, sir. You've seen a lot of militaries around the world. Is there another military that integrates aviation and ground operations the way the Marine Corps does?

Zinni: No, not really. You see some small militaries that like the Marine Corps model and push for it. A good example is Australia. The Australia military is about the size of the Marine Corps. The Australians will tell you that they have a closer affinity with the Marine Corps overall than they do with any of our other services. That's because our service's sheer size compared to theirs, like their Army and our Army, they think that the Marine Corps is a good model for that. So, they relate much better. But the marine corps of the world, even the big ones like the Korean Marines and others, they are really naval infantry. They don't have their own aviation component to the extent that we have it. Also, it isn't integrated in the same way. So, to me it's unique.

Allison: That's what I've often thought myself. But, I just thought I would ask because you've seen them all. On the Australian Air Force, are they a separate air force in the same way that our Air Force is?

Zinni: They are, but they're small enough that they can work together much like we do. I don't think that they have the same sort of concept and the level of integration. But because of their size—and by the way, they fly F-18s. So there's another weapon compatibility to us.

Allison: Yes, sir. You were an honor graduate out of AWS?

Zinni: Yes.

Allison: I'm sure you were very pleased. Any comments on that?

Zinni: Yes. I approached it with the idea that, it wasn't the idea of seeking to be an honor graduate. We were at war and you needed to know all of this stuff. I mean the level of

studying, the level of effort put in and getting to know was more of a factor of feeling this is important. We all know we were going back to Vietnam. We all know that everything we were learning here was going to save lives or accomplish the mission and was vitally important. So, I think that was the driver of that.

Allison: You were just trying to do the best job you could?

Zinni: Yes. You're just trying to do the best job you can. I think the vast majority of people in my class were more interested in winning the run for your life miles race than they were the academic awards. But, I think everybody approached the academics in the same way. "This is important stuff. We've got to learn it, because it's not just a matter of what it does for you personally and professionally. It's a matter of getting the mission done in combat and saving lives and protecting Marines."

Allison: There are students at AWS even though the war is going on now. There's a time where you have two or three years where you're not deploying. It's a time to spend with the family.

Zinni: Well, you know, first of all, at TBS we were working ungodly hours. We worked on Saturdays. We were pumping through a lot of lieutenants because the need for officers was so great. We actually had shortened the course at TBS, a six-day work week. And, Sunday you were getting your lesson plans ready and doing all of that. Because of the scouting and patrolling, we were in the fields a lot at night and everything else. I mean, I went through like 20 sets of utilities in the two years. So, you know, you came from—my initial tour in the 2d MarDiv, the Vietnam tour, then Basic School. I mean, it was on the go. AWS was only six months.

Allison: A short course.

Zinni: Yes. It was a short course. There was a lot to learn in there. So, we were working hard. Now, the nice thing about AWS is that you're coming home at nights, even though it's just six months. I lived a stones' throw from AWS, up on Geiger Ridge. Now it's enlisted housing, but in those days it was officer housing.

Allison: It was [house number] 815, I believe.

Zinni: Yes. Yes. So, it was literally a one-minute walk to AWS. So, that was a little bit of a break before going back to Vietnam. But, you know in Basic School, we had to keep track of our hours and everything else. They were trying to make the case for more officers. They just weren't there to be had. There was concern about the level with the workload and everything on us, the number of hours. But, I gotta tell you because the war was on, especially being in a teaching [role] where you're teaching the stuff like counterinsurgency and scouting and patrol and all that, I loved it. I didn't feel stressed or strained. I mean, I was getting over the illness and all and trying to work through all that. But, I think that the motivation of everybody out there and the sense of purpose and mission that you have, really, you didn't feel as if you were being ridden hard.

Allison: Was there an increased sense of urgency because the Tet Offensive was occurring at that time? Did that spool things up?

Zinni: Yes, because of the casualties we had at least one, maybe two, companies of lieutenants where all of them, regardless of MOS, were going to go to Vietnam in their first tour as an infantry officer. That included the lawyers and supply officers and everybody had to go over there and fill [out the ranks]. And then we had while we were at the Basic School, we had policies like those of General Ray Davis of the 3d Marine Division, where every ground officer that came in had to do his first six months

as a platoon commander in the field, before he went to his job. So, in those days, there wasn't an Infantry Officer Course, IOC. So, the Basic School was it.

Allison: You better learn what you need there. So, there was that sense of urgency.

Zinni: Yes. In those days, you were 0301 [MOS] when you came out of Basic School and six months later, you were a CO. You were qualified to be an 0302, but right now, you were going to be qualified because you were going right to Vietnam and right into the field. So, in that offensive there were officers that were going to go straight to an infantry platoon and then go to their MOS school training when they got back from Vietnam. That was even the lawyers.

Allison: How did that strike the students? Were there good attitudes? Good morale?

Zinni: Well, I think there was mostly shock. I think the vast majority understood it. I mean, in those days if you joined the Marine Corps, you were going to be in harm's way one way or the other. And actually, we had cases where some of the lawyers went out there and received a Navy Cross and supply officers and others the same. They got thrown into that situation. And we were very interested at Basic School in the feedback too. We did a lot of surveys and tried to understand what the commanders were seeing in the lieutenants we were putting out there. How are we doing? Was there a deficiency or something that we weren't giving? Is there something they need more time on? So, the connection was there between the Basic School and the commanders out there in the divisions and wing and other places. Not so much the wing piece but certainly the ground piece of this because all ground officers were getting immediately into platoons. We were very interested to know that we were delivering the right thing. Now, the downside of that is that we had to eliminate from

the curriculum things like drill, sword manual, all that stuff that I went through as a lieutenant coming through. It was the nondirect-combat related stuff, either got eliminated or so deeply cut that maybe those lieutenants that went through in those years, in that sort of short course that was intensive in terms of tactics and that sort of thing, lost some of that other stuff and had to sort of pick it up OJT [on the job training].

They didn't get an introduction into that. I mean, we had something like 128 hours of scouting and patrolling in the curriculum, which is quite a bit.

Allison: Which is what they need.

Zinni: Now IOC picks up a lot of that now. So, we always felt very strongly that an infantry course was necessary. As a matter of fact, my paper in AWS was about why we need an IOC. The instructors and everybody at Basic felt this so strongly. I was really glad to see when Colonel [Clyde D.] Dean, eventually Lieutenant General Dean, became CO of the Basic School—I was at Headquarters Marine Corps—when he pushed for establishing an IOC. There always were a lot of people opposed to it. They really felt that the Basic School was good enough. You can't afford the overhead and all. He pushed it through. I think it was one of the greatest decisions that the Marine Corps made. The second decision that I thought was great is that all lieutenants would go to the Basic School, even the aviators. Because, there were certain aviator programs that you could get into that didn't require Basic School. I think that common ground at Basic School is important. There was a lot of reluctance to do that because of the time in flight school and everything else—the way the law worked, you had a certain amount of time that you went over when you were released from the Marine Corps,

that you had to be paid sort of a big severance package and the addition of six months of Basic School put these lieutenants that would get out, over that.

Allison: So, they would get a large severance pay deal.

Zinni: So, sending aviators to Basic School had a financial impact to some extent. But, I was really happy to see the Marine Corps say, “We need that IOC.”

Allison: And the aviators going to Basic School.

Zinni: Those two things were just major decisions.

Allison: They could just curtail aviators going to Basic School though, because of the urgency of Vietnam, right? I mean, they had gone before the Vietnam War.

Zinni: I think other than like academy and a couple of aviator sources, the aviators did not go. The vast majority did not go to Basic School.

Allison: Even when you were going to Basic School?

Zinni: Even when I was in the war and everything. The only aviators you had in there were the ones that decided on aviation while they were there or come in from academies. But, I went to OCS [officers candidate school] or PLC [platoon leaders class] with a number of MARCAD [Marine cadet] programs and they went straight from OCS to Pensacola. They got commissioned and went down there and didn’t go through Basic.

Allison: Okay, sir. Moving on to—did you want to go back to Vietnam?

Zinni: Yes. I really wanted to go back to Vietnam. I harassed my monitor. My monitor was a guy named Bill Keys—[future] General Keys. Then, they were getting to a point where the drawdown was beginning to happen in Vietnam.

Allison: So, now we’re getting to 1970?

Zinni: Yes. 1970. He started to say to me, “Well, you know. We’re pulling out. I’ll send you somewhere else.” I said, “No. I want to go back. I want to go back.” So, then he told me, “Well, you know. I can assign you there. But, what they are doing is short stopping most of the people in Okinawa and sending them to the 3d Marine Division.” The 3d Marine Division was coming out. So, actually by the time I got to Okinawa on my way to Vietnam, 3d Division was out and the first of the battalions of the 7th Marines of the 1st Marine Division were beginning to come out. So, he said, “You know. If I assign you there, they’re just going to stop you and you’ll end up with 3d Marine Division for a year right there on Okinawa.” And I said to him, “Look. I know there’s a way you can make sure I go to 1st Marine Division.” So, he said, “Okay.” So, I got orders for the 1st Marine Division.

I didn’t, either time, go through what was called “staging.” They had the staging battalion at Camp Pendleton that people going over to Vietnam went through. Obviously, by going to Fort Bragg in the first tour, I didn’t go to staging. The tour going back, staging was closing down. They didn’t send me to staging. So, I went to Okinawa and then from Okinawa on to the 1st Division. What Colonel, then Major Keys, had said was true. Because, the entire plane that I flew over in—it flew out of Norton Air Force Base—it was all full of Marine officers, all with orders to 1st Marine Division. Only three of us went on actually to the 1st Marine Division. The rest were all stopped at Okinawa.

Allison: Was that commercial air?

Zinni: Yes. Contract air. So, I arrive in Okinawa at Camp Hague. That’s where they processed you. Then, I flew into Da Nang. We got into Da Nang late at night. They

put us up in some sort of temporary barracks. I said to the guys, "I'm going to report to 1st Marine Division." He said, "It's right up there up the hill." He said, "That's the Headquarters we all go to. We'll go tomorrow. We'll shut the gates now and stay here." I said, "I can go walk up there." He said, "No. No. You've got to stay here." We get into these temporary barracks, and we get mortared that night with rockets and mortars. So, I got my gear together and I walked up to the Division Headquarters.

Allison: That night?

Zinni: That night. Well, by now it was maybe three o'clock in the morning. I sat on a porch they had outside the personnel office. I mean, I obviously went through the gate and all, and I just sat there and waited. When first light came, this major pulls up. He had been the tactics group head after Colonel Elkins. His name is Downing. He saw me and he was the 3 [operations officer] of the 5th Marines. He says, "I need a 3 Alpha. I'm going to go in there. I'm going to get you next." I wanted to be a company commander. So, he went away somewhere. He said, "Stay here." But, I shot in. And the big thing was having been in AWS. That almost prevented me from getting down to a company. They had very few AWS graduates. An AWS grad was like gold. They were talking about the division staff or regimental staff. I just begged him and begged him. I said, "Send me down to a battalion. Send me down." He said, "You know you can go to a battalion staff." I said, "Just get me down there. I want to get a company." He says, "Okay." He says, "I'm going to assign you to 1/5." So, I thought, "Oh, now it's 5th Marines." He said, "1/5 is not part of 5th Marines." He said, "1/5 is a special unit. It is directly under control of the division."

Allison: Who had the division then, sir?

Zinni: Widdecke, Major General [Charles F.] Widdecke. One-five is the reaction force and it had a code name called the “Pacifiers.” Many of its missions were classified at the time of its existence; the term Pacifiers was classified. The unit was only to react to intelligence reports or enemy contact or downed aircraft and their recovery. When Marine or South Vietnamese units were in contact, they’d react to the contact. If they didn’t engage the enemy within 24 to 48 hours, they were extracted immediately. It’s a special unit. The unit also was really well manned—the company I eventually had had over 250 Marines in it and corpsmen. It was huge. Most of the companies weren’t even half that size under normal circumstances. We had experimental weapons. We had extra weapons. I had nine machine guns instead of six. I had automatic grenade launchers, which were crank [operated]. It was experimental. We had the experimental multishot flamethrower at the time. Automatic grenade launcher, extra 60mm mortars. I had my own scout dogs; I had my own engineers, my own scouts, my own S-2 scouts. It was a huge company. When I got down to the battalion, just to explain a little bit about how this worked, there were levels of what they call “Pacifier alert”. The first level of alert, Pacifier One, within 10 minutes had to board helicopters and react to an enemy sighting. So, you stayed at the ready. You stayed in your hooches. We had these Southeast Asian hooches—”SEA Huts.” We were located right near Da Nang. We had a dedicated helicopter squadron to the battalion. When you had a Pacifier alert, these sirens went off and you had to run by and grab your gear. Your gear was on all of these meat hooks. You ran by the ammo bunk and just picked up your ammo. You double timed right up to the landing pad, get on a helicopter and you were out. That was short. That was like 10 minutes.

Then, you had a Pacifier Two. Pacifier Two were a number of hours before you had to react. You provided security for the battalion CP. Then, if you got called out the H&S took over as security. Pacifier Three, the third company protected the division ridge, the division CP. It was kind of like a place to get a break. We had four levels of alert built around each of the four rifle companies, with their reinforcements. They ran all the way down to 24 hours for the first three and then the fourth one was kind of a stand-down. So, when I got down to the battalion General [at that time lieutenant colonel] [Bernard E.] Trainor was the battalion commander . . .

Allison: Legendary Marine.

Zinni: Yes. He saw that I had been to AWS. He said, "You're going to be my 3 Alpha." I thought, "Holy cow." I mean this was devastating. I said, "Sir, I want a company. I want a company." He said, "No. No. I need you on the staff. You're going to be my 3 Alpha." And the three then was a great big guy named Bill Anderson. A major. A really great guy. He came over to me and says, "Look. I think you ought to be a company commander. We could use you in the companies. Let me talk to the CO . . . " They had captains, too, the H&S CO, the COMMO and all. So I go down to the captain's hut and he says, "Grab a rack. Cool your heels down there. Let me talk to the battalion commander." So I spent about two days down there. It was good. I got to know some of the other captains in the staff and all. He managed to convince General Trainor to give me Alpha Company 1/5. So I joined Alpha Company 1/5. They were on division ridge. They were providing the security up for the division and I joined the Alpha Company up there.

Allison: Before we get into some of your operations and what you did with that company, I'd

like to ask you, did AWS prepare you adequately for doing what you were going to do there as a company commander?

Zinni: Yes. AWS did. Now, as a company commander—first of all, you're in command now. It's not like being an advisor. I had a lot of experience in the advisor unit with fire support, so I felt very confident about that. And, of course, the maneuver piece of that because, although not in command with the Vietnamese Marines, you obviously understood how all that works. So basically the tactics and the fire support and all that were there. I think what AWS contributed is a lot of the other kinds of elements into this, the coordination with air, like helo-lifts and planning helicopterborne assaults and [inaudible]. We had done that—we did that in the advisor unit to a large extent, too. But more formal, understanding how to work in the American system and all that. I think the other part of that, too, was the operations orders and the things like that that you do. The logistics planning and work that you need that were important. So it took your experience on the ground but now brought it into the U.S. side of how this all works, but gave you a much greater depth of knowledge of what was occurring levels above you to support that so you knew how to use the system and make sure you communicated within the system well.

Allison: Sort of an intellectual understanding.

Zinni: Yes. In all areas, like logistics and all that. Fire support planning at a much deeper level than we were doing, maybe, with the Vietnamese Marines.

Allison: What was your impression of Colonel Trainer as a battalion commander? Had you heard of him before?

Zinni: I loved him. I had not, and as I got to know him, he just struck me as a brilliant guy.

He seemed to have a great sense of the battlefield. He really understood the enemy and seemed to have that sixth sense. He was a very courageous guy. He'd go out in the field on an operation with my company or two companies out there, he'd come out and his battalion CP consisted of a couple radio operators, a sergeant major, and the S-3 wandering around with no security. When he was with my company, I would always put a squad around him and one time he saw the squad. He got upset. Called me up, "Get this squad and put them out there where they can do some good. Get them away from me." And I thought, "Holy cow, I don't want the battalion commander zapped with my company." So I would have to get my best squad leader and say, "You make sure you provide security for Colonel Trainer but don't let him see you." So I mean, he was gutsy. He was always up front. He was with the troops. He knew his business. I mean he was a real pro. So you had that element of courage. Loved being out in the field with the troops, as did the battalion sergeant major. Right down, right up front with the companies. I think everybody really respected him for his brains, though. Not just that he was smart, but he was savvy. He just understood what was going on, understood the enemy and what was happening.

Allison: When you met with him, you're going to get Company A. Did he give you any marching orders, anything specific he told you to do? Words of wisdom or anything like that that you remember?

Zinni: No. He sort of felt Company A—his words were, Company A had gone adrift a bit, they need strong leadership. Now, when I got down to Company A, I've got to tell you, they had great lieutenants, they had great staff NCOs. Fantastic. To me, it was a fantastic company. But they've been in the field a lot. I think sometimes companies

need a chance to show who they are and what they are. They didn't necessarily . . .

Allison: They hadn't really been challenged?

Zinni: Yes. That and—I don't want to talk about predecessors or anything like that, but there may not have been the best relationship between my predecessor there and the battalion commander for whatever reason. That's not for me to judge in any way. I think coming in, I noticed one thing and it just wasn't Alpha Company, it was every place else. And this is from my first tour that I've been around American units. American units, with exceptions, allow themselves to forget the basics and to—and I would say this was true of most units, it wasn't just particularly true to companies, but—they got down to forgetting the simple things. When I got there, being an instructor in the Basic School, I think the lieutenants knew who I was and where I was coming from and were wondering whether I was going to enforce kind of like the TBS standard.

Allison: The schoolbook.

Zinni: Yes. And in many ways, the old salts, the troops that were on the ground that have had combat experience, can intimidate someone without it. But, in my case, they're getting somebody who not only had a tour in Vietnam and the combat experience but was an instructor and knew this stuff. The best example that I use is, when I checked in, there was one lieutenant—one of my lieutenant platoon commanders checking in at the same time, into Alpha Company. And I was going down to Alpha Company and I happened to be walking around one of the buildings going over to the Alpha Company headquarters and I saw this lieutenant. He was talking to his platoon sergeant. They didn't see me, but I was in earshot. The platoon sergeant was walking with him, and

the lieutenant said, "What I would like to do tomorrow morning is I'd like the company to fall out, and I would like to talk to the company then I'd like to do a weapons inspection of the company." The platoon sergeant kind of laughed and said, "Sir, we don't do that here in Vietnam. We don't do weapons inspections. These Marines, they take care of their weapons, you don't need to worry about it." I watched the lieutenant, wondering what he's going to do because now he's being challenged. He says, "Well, humor me. There will be a weapons inspection tomorrow." So I liked that. I thought, "This is great."

He wasn't going to be intimidated by the platoon sergeant. He had never been to Vietnam. No combat experience, obviously. So the next morning, I went around to the platoon and he starts down and he's about the third Marine down the first rank. He turns to the platoon sergeant and he says, "Platoon sergeant, these weapons are filthy." And he said, "Well, sir, we didn't know this was going to be some kind of boot camp inspection." The lieutenant turned to him and said, "There's no such thing as a boot camp inspection. There is one standard for the maintenance and cleanliness of a weapon, and that's the standard we're going to have in this platoon. Now fall out the platoon, and go back and clean these weapons the way you're supposed to." And I thought, "Well, God bless that lieutenant." I loved him for that. I started with the company saying, we're going to train. When we're back in the rear, we're going to go through training. They would [think], "Oh, you've got to be kidding." They just wanted to crash and everything else. We would train in helo embark and debark drills. I would teach all the NCOs call for fire, have my FOs do that. In the beginning, the other companies would laugh at them because we'd be there training when they didn't

have to. Then after a while, they got to be very good and they liked this idea that they knew more and they were better. I did a company inspection of everybody. I was horrified. Here's the grenadiers. They have all their 40mm grenades in these demo bags, loose, which is dangerous. I look in these demo bags, these rounds. So I made them wear vests—and they were all carrying way too much ammo. They had never used that much. I had two people to a squad with a vest. I started to standardize the load. You had to know who in the squad had things like the flashlights, this was the ammo load, this is the way it would be carried, standardized their uniforms. I would go down the ranks—I found this one young Marine, some lance corporal with a scope on his M16. I had never seen a scope before. I said, “Are you a sniper? Are you a designated marksman or anything like that?” He said, “Sir, I drew the weapon in the armory and that's what I got.”

Allison: It had a scope on it.

Zinni: And I said, “Have you fired—have you qualified since boot camp?” He said, “No, sir.” I said, “What did you shoot at boot camp?” He said, “Sir, I was unc [unqualified].” I said, “You were unc and you got a scope? You know how to use a scope?” “No.” So I had to get the scopes [taken] off, figure out who should get the scopes, let's start with the experts, the highest scores, issue them out. So we started to do these things, I started to really crack down.

Now, I had a fantastic first sergeant, fantastic gunny, and this was music to their ears. I think this is what they wanted to see. Especially the gunny, both of them went on to be sergeants major.

Allison: Do you remember their names, sir?

Zinni: Yeah. First Sergeant Alls and Gunnery Sergeant Berhends. Berhends was a real warrior. He loved this sort of thing. I didn't do it in a hard-a—s way. I tried to convince the troops, I want to bring you back alive. I want this company to accomplish their missions, but there is a standard, there is a way to do this. You don't come to Vietnam and then think that that only applies back in the states, that that's sort of cosmetic and it's a game. This is for real, those skills, those things you do. In the beginning, it was tough to convince them. I mean obviously they'd do it all, but as they went out and they saw how when they applied it to the field, when they engaged the enemy and how they did all this, the sense of pride and everything really got to them. We were on an LZ—Baldy, one time ready to launch out and there was a company from the Americal Division, an Army company there with us. I looked at the company, and I thought it was coming back in from the field and they looked so beat up. I said to the company commander, "Jeez, the guys must've been out a long time." He said, "No, we're just going out." And my troops started to go over and talk to the soldiers and all the men. They were saying, "Hey, Skipper, come here. Look at this machine gun. What a piece of s—t." *[laughter]* They began to take pride in their skills and standards. But, to me, it was just everything I had learned with the first experience with the Vietnamese Marines then Basic School and then insisted that we do this right. The first time we were in the field we were getting ready to set in for a night defense. I told the platoon commanders, I said, "I want, from each of you, [your] fire plan sketch. And then we're going to prepare a company fire plan sketch. But I want each of your squad leaders to do a fire plan sketch and submit it to you." Now, they knew what they were doing, the lieutenants. So they did it. So I said, "Now show

me the squad leaders.” And they were laughing. So like, one of the squad leaders drew—he was an artist. He drew a picture of what was in front of him. It was like a landscape *[laughter]*. So I said—obviously, we’re going to teach squad leaders how to do fire plan sketches. We’re going to teach them fire support planning, how to call for fire and all this.

Allison: To the squad leaders?

Zinni: To the squad leaders. So we ended up—I knew the platoon commanders knew what they were doing—obviously going down to the squad level, checking fighting positions, making sure they were done in the dimensions and everything the right way. I think they began to see—they began to feel good about themselves. They began to just see that they were something different, something better. That’s not to say there weren’t a lot of quality people. I had some NCOs in there that were Silver Star recipients from previous tours that really knew their stuff. I think they wanted somebody to say, “We are going to do it the right way, and this is the way we’re going to do it.”

Allison: A lot of people were thinking it but nobody had really stepped forward and said it.

Zinni: Yes. I think you get into that sense of—you’re lulled into that sense of complacency. You sort of short-circuit everything. You begin to feel sorry for the troops. In some cases, if you’re the new guy, you know this isn’t right or you shouldn’t be doing it that way but the old salts can influence, you know. “Ah, we don’t do it that way in Vietnam.” So it’s a combination of a lot things that went into it. But if you come in with the, let’s say, the authority, not only based on the position you hold but based on your own experience, they can’t challenge you on it. Then you unleash, within the

unit, all those that feel that's the right way and wanted to do it the way they were trained in.

Allison: One of the advantages you had was this combat tour as an advisor, and they knew it.

Zinni: Yes. They knew it.

Allison: So you had the authority, this combat experience.

Zinni: And I think Basic School, too, because you know the tactics. You know that when you're out there talking about something, you know what the hell you're talking about. It isn't made up or it isn't lore, it isn't BS. It's the manual. Like I used to say, it's written that way for a reason. It's coming from experience and analysis that you have to appreciate it. I don't believe you should be a slave to doctrine or tactics or techniques or procedures, but if you're going to go off those, you should have good reason. You should understand what those are so that if you decide to make a change, there's a rationale for it, there's an understanding that, "I'm going to do it this way because, although the manual says this, in this situation, this makes more sense." But you know what the manual says. You know what the basics are.

Allison: Also, what was your feeling about promotions? Did you push that forward? See that as good leadership?

Zinni: Well, yes. We had a lot of meritorious promotions we could give. Sometimes I felt my predecessor made those decisions unilaterally and didn't involve the lieutenants and the first sergeant and gunny enough, so I tried to make sure they were involved. If we were going to make a couple choices on meritorious promotions, who should get them, based on what, and everybody had a fair say. So I think they were appreciative that those decisions weren't being made unilaterally, that they were coming in. And I

wanted the promotions based on performance and responsibility that we were giving people, not on how many questions you could answer in a board or something like that.

Allison: At this level, as a captain, and leadership at a combat infantry unit, how important is it that your Marines like you? Or is it more important they respect you? What's the balance there?

Zinni: Of course, it's more important that they respect you. When I was at Camp Lejeune in a later tour and ran an NCO school, an infantry NCO school, I gave—and all these NCOs were Vietnam vets at that time because it was immediately following this tour. I asked them—I used to give them a questionnaire—on one of them I asked them, “What is the trait you respect most out of your lieutenant? Your officer? Your captain?” I would say that 95 to 98 percent said, “He knows his stuff.” I mean, they can tolerate anything else, even if he's a hardnose or anything else. The thing they value most is, if they're going to go in the field and put their life on the line, they want somebody out there that knows what the hell he's doing.

Allison: So that's the number one leadership trait?

Zinni: That's the number one leadership to me. In combat, I don't care how much you're liked, what a magnificent personality you have, your ability to relate to the troops. If they know when they go to the field and they're going to get into a fight that you know what the hell you're doing, that's going to be the greatest degree of respect and the thing that's most important to them. The rest of the stuff won't overcome that value. To me, that was number one.

Allison: So that turned out to be really important for effective leadership for you. You had that

knowledge from TBS and AWS and also the practical knowledge with the Marines, the South Vietnamese Marines.

Zinni: I think that was key. I mean, obviously, the other things are important, too. Your relationship to the troops, understanding they were going to get a fair shake, that you were approachable, they could talk to you. I think that's key, especially in combat because of the stresses and strains. The idea that the officers are approachable—I liked all my lieutenants, I liked their leadership style. The troops knew they could talk to their lieutenants. They felt good about their lieutenants. They respected their lieutenants. I didn't have any duds, same way with the staff NCOs. I was blessed with high-quality staff NCOs there that made a difference. All the platoon sergeants and the staff sergeants were good. The gunny was fantastic. The first sergeant was great. So the leadership aspect was easy because I didn't have anybody in the top echelons of the leadership that had a style that was a hard-ass or something that would've been more difficult to deal with. And all my lieutenants were on their first tour. All my staff NCOs, with maybe a couple exceptions, were on their second tour.

Allison: You had mentioned several different types of weapons that were being employed there. Which ones stand out in your mind as being particularly effective? Not just the new ones, not the experimental, but the day-to-day weapons like the “blooper,” M79 grenade launcher, the M16. I'd like to get your perspectives on that.

Zinni: Well the one experimental weapon that everybody really liked was what they called the “Super Blooper,” experimental, had a crank—it had a lot of problems, it had problems with jamming and everything, but you put out a stream of 40mm grenades so it just was devastating. I think that really impressed the troops the most. Having

nine machine guns was a big difference, too, instead of six, the normal. We had an extra.

Allison: M60s?

Zinni: M60s, yes. And nine machine guns make a big difference in a fight. I only used the flamethrower once, the day I got wounded. I just told the Marine to shoot it, he didn't even have a target but I did it to stop—to give the enemy a shock while we adjusted our lines. So I really didn't see that in action other than once. Their rifles seemed fine. I didn't detect, at that time, any problems. Again, we insisted on absolute cleanliness. The M16 to me was a sensitive weapon. You had to keep it clean. You had to maintain it. You couldn't take it for granted. It wasn't one of those kinds of weapons you can get muddy, throw it in the dirt, and then expect it to keep performing. It wasn't constructed mechanically that simply and that durable. But I didn't think we had any problems. Again, we stayed on top of them in terms of cleanliness of the weapons. By then the bloopers, the M79s, everybody had, they knew what they could do. I think they were valuable in the squad. I think eventually going to the over-under and having the [M]203s with a rifle is good because having someone with just a pistol and a blooper, you need that other rifle in there. You really need that going out. I had shotguns in the [company]—sometimes I carried a shotgun, but most of the time just a pistol. But shotguns were useful so I'd like my gunny to carry one. I liked having some shotguns in the unit because there were times when that weapon came in handy, so certain people should be carrying them. I don't recall particularly any other weapons that stood out. My 60mm mortar, my weapons platoon was exceptional. They knew their guns really well—we had a great weapons platoon commander. The 60

mortars were fantastic; they could hit a dime. As a matter of fact, General Trainor was always impressed as hell with the 60 mortars. And the company would rather have their 60 mortars in support than the 81s or the artillery because of the way these guys were hitting their targets. And my weapons platoon commander was excellent in fire support planning. The 60s were—I remember we brought them back into the Marine Corps because they had been out in Vietnam—the old World War II, Korean War [inaudible] guys and bringing them back in was a great addition, having their own indirect fire support [inaudible] was tremendously valuable.

Allison: I didn't realize that they had been taken out.

Zinni: Yes. They were out, I think, somewhere after the Korean War until Vietnam we brought it back in. It was great. Especially—we'd get into some really rough terrain where a lot of the fire from artillery and others could be masked but you could move those 60 mortars in position where you can cover a lot of that dead space, masked space. And they were much more responsive, obviously.

Allison: Did you have adequate fire support? I also would like to especially get your perspectives on aviation. Did you get Marine air there at that time?

Zinni: Yes. In terms of the fire support, I mean obviously the normal artillery fire support, generally good. I had some bad times with them. One time with General Trainor trying to register fires—it was at night and we thought we were going to get hit pretty well that night. He was upset with the artillery support and trying to register the fires, and we just kept taking incoming rounds from them. He finally went back and affected the relief of an artillery battery commander. But generally the artillery was good and responsive. The air was great, particularly the attack helicopters, Cobras. We saw the

first generation of Cobras. And we had our squadron, a dedicated squadron and the squadron commander happened to go to AWS with me.

Allison: Who was he?

Zinni: I forget his name but I knew him, which actually saved our butt a couple of times.

Allison: Was that a CH-46 squadron?

Zinni: It was a 46 squadron. The medevac helicopters were fantastic. I mean, those medevac pilots would put themselves at risk to save a Marine. They would come in the hot zones and—when I was evacuated, I thought we could not bring in helicopters because we didn't have an adequate zone and we were under heavy fire and we can't bring them in. The medevac helicopters showed up, and I got upset and I was laying there, wounded. I'm screaming at the pilot, "I didn't call for you. We don't want you in here taking fire." And he says, "We just wanted you to know we're up here. And when you say come in, we don't care what's happening on the ground, we'll come in and get you, get your wounded." Of course, I was the one that was wounded. That's the kind of stuff that Marines know. There's somebody in that cockpit willing to do that. So the support was fantastic. Because I was only there four months before I was wounded and evacuated, I didn't use any fixed-wing support directly in that tour.

Allison: I was wondering if you ever noticed the difference between Marine CAS [close air support], fixed-wing CAS, as opposed to Air Force or Navy. But if you never saw that all . . .

Zinni: No naval gunfire my first tour. In the first tour was Air Force CAS. I never, in the second tour, used Marine close air support or any close air support.

Allison: From fixed-wing?

Zinni: From fixed-wing. Now, obviously, the Cobras and the other helicopter support, the medevacs.

Allison: Was the ROE [rules of engagement] there overly restrictive?

Zinni: Yes, we ended up with a situation that concerned me a lot. We ended up with, after My Lai and then the Marine Corps had an incident up north and I forget exactly . . .

Allison: Son Thang?

Zinni: Yes. And the aftermath of that, it seemed to me the senior leadership was really nervous. And this ROE, it was very confusing. What would bother me is generals would come down and they would literally go up to one of your Marines and say, “Okay, you’re in this situation. You’re walking point, you see this, you see that. What do you do? What do you do?” The Marines would be intimidated. I had a situation that we were in the free fire zone. This is up in the Que Son Mountains. It’s known—it’s bad guy land. We’re going through it—tactical movement. And the point on the advance guard called back and says—I get a call saying, “Sir, the point sees some Vietnamese in black pajamas with AK47s.” Well, shoot! *[laughter]* They wanted to know if they should shoot or not. If we don’t, they’re going to shoot. We had confused these troops. I finally had to sit them down and say, “Look, we’ll be clear on the rules of engagement when we go out there. But if you see somebody that is armed with AK47s in an area that’s a free fire zone . . . Of course, we were landing based on enemy contact or on enemy intelligence and everything else—you move against the enemy. You take action against the enemy. You don’t let the enemy get the initiative and stumble into them. The troops, at that stage of the game, the rules of engagement became so if they weren’t restrictive they were perceived as restrictive. They were

perceived that if you were going to make a mistake, you'd better make a mistake or an error in judgment on the side of caution, which could cost you lives. And it wasn't that we were trying to be loosey-goosey with the rules of engagement. Certainly, I've been with the Vietnamese. We didn't want to kill any innocents. I had a place in my heart for them. But I didn't want my troops putting themselves in harm's way because they were confused by rules of engagement. I was saying that. When generals would come down to the company, the first thing they wanted to do was get in the face of some lance corporal and start going through the rules of engagement game, which I just really disliked. I just didn't think it was needed—be careful about that. I think we learned from that in Vietnam, because I've got to tell you, later on, in all the other operations I've been on as commander of CentCom [Central Command] and Somalia and everything else, we got a handle on rules of engagement. I feel confident that we learned from those lessons now. We know how to communicate. You can't answer everything. Sometimes you've got to make a judgment move. And as I saw in Somalia, when somebody made a judgment and it was based on the best information they had, if the result turned out to be tragic for some reason, if their intentions were right and their judgment was solid, we backed the troops up. And I saw that and I felt that we'd come a long way.

Allison: Had any of this antiwar feeling from the United States started to have a negative effect on your troops? Was that coming in at this time?

Zinni: Yes, by now we had seen it all. By 1970, you had seen it all. When I was back at Quantico at Basic School, what we used to be called the school's demonstration troops (SDT). There was a battalion of troops located at main side that supported training at

The Basic School, but it was like an infantry battalion. They were also responsible for responding to antiwar demonstrations in Washington, DC. I had friends that were in SDT. Some company and platoon commanders and their troops would have to go up to Washington for riot control and occasionally, outside the gate at Quantico. You obviously read about and knew about these things, and there were restrictions on where you could wear your uniform. I think, the sense I had in 1970 is, none of the Marines were under any illusions that they're going to be welcomed home as heroes. But that's not why they were there. The reason they—I was always amazed at their courage. I was always amazed at what they did. And I came to the conclusion that they're doing this for each other, they're doing this for the unit, they're doing this for the Corps. It didn't seem to matter about [back home]—I think it hurt them later on. I've dealt with a lot of Vietnam vets. I was out at Los Angeles with an organization that helps the homeless. There's a large area of Los Angeles that has a lot of homeless people in the street. I went out there because of this program that was working with Vietnam vets. I was appalled at the number of Vietnam vets out there. I think it even hurts more as they see, now, troops that came back from the Gulf War, now the respect and the way they're treated, that they never had that. The victory parades, treated with respect and as heroes, that they didn't have [that]. At that stage in the game, we also had some draftees at that time because the Marine Corps . . .

Allison: They were starting to take draftees?

Zinni: Yes, oh yeah. When I had draftees in my company we had—but the vast majority were volunteers. They were out there for all different reasons, came from all walks of life. But I think what they were doing on that battlefield was for each other and for their

unit. And that's kind of the way they saw it. They put that stuff out of their minds, generally. I was more worried about things like drugs and racial—I didn't—knock on wood—in the company I didn't have any racial problems, although the racial tensions at that stage of where we were in the Marine Corps and Vietnam were always there. There were all kinds of things that were happening in other units. You had to be aware of it. You had to pay attention to it. You had to make sure that nothing was happening. Occasionally you'd get an individual that came in, on either side—it was a problem that they were trying to cause problems—and you had to be sensitive to that. Drugs, you had to be sensitive to that. I mean, they were available, even in Vietnam, and you had to stay on top of that. So you had to be sensitive to that. To me, they were a deeper concern. Again, in that situation in that company, I didn't see significant problems. Thank God. And I attribute that to the lieutenants and the staff NCOs and even some of the NCOs, just the quality of leadership that was in there. And the numbers we had with senior rank.

Allison: Could you sense a mood among the civilian populace in Vietnam at this time?

Whereas you'd been there in '67, now it's three years later. What was the mood among the civilian populace? Did they have an inkling that the United States is about to pull out and that they might be left vulnerable to the Communists?

Zinni: The mood of the people, the people that I had contact with on my second tour, and again, I was there only for about four months.

Allison: Right.

Zinni: The Vietnamese civilians—I tried to do as much as I can—was not maybe very significant. But I did feel, by then, they had reached a point of despair. There was no

more, maybe, idealistic view that this war was going to be won, that the war was worth it in any way. I remember we were going through Da Nang and this little boy saw us coming down. We had like a convoy, and he stood in a corner spitting at the American vehicles. Never would have seen that in '67. My driver got all kind of upset about it, and I said, "Try to understand, we're over here helping them and all." But I think by then, the war, the violence, the toll they paid, the lack of seeing any, in their minds, kind of progress they would expect, I think they definitely had lost maybe any belief that there was going to be a better outcome, and a victory in the South.

Allison: They weren't buying off on Vietnamization?

Zinni: Well I think in a way, the Americans being out of there, they may have felt might be just better all the way around. Other than those that obviously had a vested interest in the South winning like the Catholics who came south and others, they just wanted this violence over with. The war, to them, it just did not make any sense. Anything to get out from under the violence. And so I did notice an attitude change. I don't think there was much hope or belief in the war by then. Obviously, it was going to take it's own course and they were maybe more fatalistic about it than anything else.

Allison: You had mentioned that fatalism as part of their cultural makeup earlier. What was the nature of the enemy, the VC or NVA and their tactics?

Zinni: The enemy by then—I had a sense that pretty much the Tet Offensive had decimated the guerrilla by night, farmer by day and you were pretty well down to hardcore Viet Cong and North Vietnamese. By now, you had a hardened, seasoned enemy. Pretty tough. I got the impression that by and large they were waiting for the Americans to finish getting out and they were regrouping for, what eventually was the Easter

Offensive and then eventually the takedown. Making contact—the enemy would lob the occasional round, take a shot at you. If you went into his backyard, obviously he's going to engage you. But it seemed to me the enemy was in a regrouping stage by then. The contacts we made were because we went out looking for them. We reacted to enemy contact and that sort of thing at that stage of the game. Again, other than the occasional rocket or something that he fired at a base or something or a mortar, I think they were just waiting for the Americans to make a full departure.

Our contacts with the enemies were when we went out after them and that tended to be on things like a reaction to a downed aircraft, we'd go out immediately, secure the area. I remember we did a downed Cobra and a couple other aircraft and we'd surround the aircraft, we'd go out immediately, react, protect it until they extracted it and took out any casualties. We would react to SigInt [signals intelligence] contacts that they picked up. Radio battalion picked up information; we'd go out and react to those. Basically, if we discovered enemy in what was called Rumor Valley, which is the valley right on the other side of division ridge, and so we went into that area to clean it out. They put in some heavy booby traps.

Allison: So it was more or less quiet though?

Zinni: More or less it was quiet unless you really went out aggressively. And of course, our mission was to go out there so we maybe we're seeing a little bit more than anybody else. But still, overall, it was nothing like my first tour. The first real contact was when I was wounded.

Allison: Would you talk about that now, sir? Give me a description of that.

Zinni: Yes. Alpha Company was back on Pacifier 1. We were the number one alert. I got a

call—the sirens went off. So we mustered and grabbed all our gear, went up to the landing zone. General Trainor, who was then Colonel Trainor, called me into the CP. The troops were all down waiting. Helicopters hadn't come in yet. When I walked in the CP, there were all these people in there, senior officers from division and some civilian, turned out to be CIA. And he said, "Here's the situation. We have a North Vietnamese officer, prisoner," who turned out to be the highest-ranking intelligence officer ever captured. And what had happened is that Charlie Company 1/5 a few weeks before had been out on an operation. They had reacted to a report of some sort of meeting of high-ranking officials. When they got out there, they got in a little bit of a firefight and one of the troops in Charlie Company saw this obvious enemy guy running around. Instead of shooting him, the kid dropped all his gear, ran across the rice paddy, tackled him, drug him back in. It ended up being this guy. I don't think they knew what they had at the time. So they bring him back in. They realize what they had. It gets turned over to the CIA and they begin to interrogate him and realize they got this find. The guy agrees to lead us to his intelligence headquarters, which is the equivalent of the I Corps—the enemy equivalent to the I Corps headquarters, intelligence headquarters. It sits in the Que Son Mountains, and he would be willing to lead us in there. The South Vietnamese got wind that we had a very senior prisoner and they wanted him. They felt if the South Vietnamese got him, all the information would be compromised. He had fingered the mayor of Da Nang and the police chief as VC and others. So they wanted to get him to this headquarters before the South Vietnamese got him and before the information became compromised. So they decide they're going to launch this operation. The plan was one of the other companies,

Pacifier 2 company, which happened to be Charlie Company, would go in and put a ring around the area with Colonel Trainor, and bring in mortar fire support. Recon would do a whole series of outposts in an outer ring. This is the operation that Colonel [William G.] Leftwich was killed on. So they would insert their teams around us. My company would go in with the prisoner to find his HQ.

Allison: Wasn't this part of Operation Imperial Lake?

Zinni: Yes. Imperial Lake was an ongoing, this was part [of that]—anything you did out there was part of Imperial Lake. So the recon would ring the outer area. Charlie Company would put units on the top. And then this guy [Loi] would go with me and the plan was we would fly over, he'd identify the headquarters, we would land, we would go in and seize the headquarters.

Allison: Fly around in a [CH-]46?

Zinni: Yes. So, we launch and I'm up there with [Loi]. There's an ITT [interrogation translation team], but I spoke Vietnamese. He's got the maps and he's telling me, he said, "Your maps are different than our maps. It's very hard for me to relate your map to our map." And as he looked out of the helicopter and looked around he says, "I've never been in the air looking down so I don't associate the ground that well from this perspective." The mountains are all [inaudible] and everything. I could see where it would be hard to pinpoint exactly. Because he said—he's describing this to me, it's a deep draw and there are these deep caves and we're in these caves. He said there had been no U.S. military or South Vietnamese in this area since 1965, so it's really remote. So we're flying around, flying around and of course, I'm realizing that obviously, if anybody's down there . . .

Allison: They're going to get suspicious.

Zinni: So then he says, "That area down there, that looks familiar. Can we land down there and let me look around?" So we land and get out of the helicopters. Obviously the helicopters take off. We set up in this area, and it was kind of an open area, and it was monsoon season so there was a lot of mud and everything. He's looking around. He says, "I think this looks familiar. I think I can, from here, pick up maybe the trail network that leads into there." So he's going around with my scouts and everybody else. So I'm in the landing zone. One of my platoon commanders comes up to me, he goes, "I need to show you something." *[laughs]* Meanwhile, the engineers had discovered this big, 500-pound bomb that was a dud so they were getting ready to blow that. But the platoon commander comes over and there's this huge area, like a mud flat, and it looks like the entire Chinese army had marched through this. There are all these boot prints. They're boot prints, but they're not ours. They're not jungle boot prints. They're North Vietnamese boot prints and a large unit had come through. So now we know there's something.

Allison: It could be a setup?

Zinni: Well, not so much a setup but we know there's a lot—there's going to be a lot of enemy in this area, many who were fresh. So he comes back and we take out the maps. He comes back, and he says, "I can't pick it up. We need to get back up in helicopters." We get back up in the helicopters. We're flying around. Of course now it's getting later in the day and—it's like late morning, noonish, and he finally says, "I recognize that. That is the beginning of the trail network. Can we get there . . ." so we get down on the ground, and he says, "This is the trail network. This will lead us into

there.” So we start up these series of, like over these fingers, these trail networks. And my scouts—I had great S-2 scouts. These kids, they’d never tripped a booby trap.

These guys could smell a booby trap.

Allison: S-2 scouts?

Zinni: S-2 scouts, yes. Marines. And I had my Kit Carson scouts forward and the scout dogs. We had scout dogs. You had to keep the scout dogs away from the Kit Carson scouts because *[laughter]*—they’d go after anything. But I had them all up there and my scout comes back—and we would start up these trails and he’d say, “No, this is the wrong trail,” and he’d come back. So the units were beginning to accordion and bunch up and I was really getting worried about that. So I went up on the point with my scouts, Kit Carson, S-2 scouts, the dogs, this guy with the ITT team. I said, “We’ve got to stop this bunching up. If it’s not the right trail, we’re going to have to readjust and move, but I don’t want to get bunched up and do all this accordioneing.” Then my S-2 scouts started coming back, said, “Sir, you need to come up here and look at this.” We would find like these little outcroppings and down in the outcroppings is obviously where there was some listening post or sentinel post. But there would be actually in some cases there were still cooking fires, like a little pot of rice that was still hot. You could see where somebody was in there. And then they started to find these hasty booby traps strung across. They were picking up the wires that they had these hasty booby traps that they quickly jury-rigged in front of us. But they were picking them up. So I called the battalion commander and I said to him, “Look, we’re going to run out of daylight if we keep doing this. We’re on this trail network. I’ve looked at the map and we’re headed toward one big draw, and I really feel the caves

are in that draw. It's the only one that fits the description that he's described." So I would like to get off the trails, go right into that draw. General Trainor says, "The last thing I want you to do is stay on the trail network, but I think if we make the wrong call here, if that's not the right draw, they already know we're here. They may be burning papers, hauling a—s, doing whatever. I think we got to go with what this guy's saying. We've got to stay on top of them, get into them. If we try to bet everything on another approach, we could miss this opportunity." And I thought about it, thought he was right. He is right. We're on the verge, and we've got to keep doing this. So, again, he's starting up these hills, up these fingers and then down, pulling back, going around. So I go up to the prisoner, and he stops suddenly. We're about 150 meters short of this ridgeline, which is the ridgeline overlooking this deep draw. And he stops and he says, "They won't let you go any further." I go, "What are you talking about they won't?" He says, "This ridgeline's defended by two companies. One North Vietnamese regular and one regular Viet Cong. This is the limit they'll let you go before they open up." I was ready to grab him and say, "Why didn't you tell me this before?" when the world opens up and I'm hit right away.

Allison: You think they identified you as an officer?

Zinni: I don't think so. They just opened up.

Allison: About how far away was that, sir?

Zinni: Oh, it was really close. There was thick vegetation. It was short scrub but it was thick, and as I had gone up there, I was trying to get Cobras up in front of us, too. So when they opened up, I was turned handing my handset back to my radio operator. So I was turned this way, and they hit me with three rounds.

Allison: From the left to the right?

Zinni: From the side and it sort of pitched across my back and my flak jacket. But it went through the flak jacket.

Allison: It hit your flak jacket but went through that?

Zinni: Yes, went through. So, I go down and we've got a couple of wounded and now we're in this firefight. So I'm with my 1st platoon commander, a guy named Bob Meyers, a lieutenant, and he comes up and he takes my flak jacket off and part of my back falls out, like a chunk of meat falls out *[laughs]*. "Holy s—t." But I think the good news, I couldn't see the wound. He's looking at it. I'm seeing his face. He pulls out a battle dress, and he's trying to figure out how to put this in. I say, "Uh, it must be pretty bad." And I said to him, "Okay, Bob, we need to get everybody up online. You need to do this." So he's moving troops. He's trying to get his corpsmen over.

Allison: You're not unconscious or anything?

Zinni: No, not yet. The corpsman comes over, Doc Miller, and he starts—he looks at my back and he says—of course, rounds are flying and one of the squad leaders there, a Corporal Rocky Slawinski, one of my best squad leaders, his troops were up on the point so he's moving around. He's got some wounded up there. They were calling for corpsmen. I said, "We've got to get some of those troops that are wounded back out of there. Get another squad up." Slawinski said, "They're my guys. I'll take care of them. Nobody goes up for them but me." He's running up trying to move his casualties back. We're really under fire.

Allison: So other people are getting hit, too?

Zinni: Yes.

Allison: Other Marines.

Zinni: And a corpsman looks at my back. He says, “Sir, I don’t know what to tell you. I can see your spine. I don’t know. Your spine I don’t think was hit. Keep pinching the back of your legs. If you can feel it, you’re okay.” Because the danger is if there’s still rounds in there it could paralyze and all. Everybody’s brutally honest in these times. There’s no bedside manner [*laughter*]. So they’re trying their best with battle dressings and all, which didn’t quite work because when rounds went through the flak jacket it really chewed things up.

We began to see some of the enemy kind of moving up further—because this was on a ridgeline that sort of went from the left side high down to the right side. And we began to see the enemy kind of moving on the ridgeline, which looked like they were trying to get up the ridgeline to get a flanking fire on us. So I told Bob, I said, “We’ve got to get a squad up there with a machine gun or something. We’ve got to beat them up to the higher ground.” And one of his other squad leaders took off with a squad. They get into a fight up there, and he takes the higher end and starts shooting down on them, then they begin to pull back. But in the meantime there’s all this firing going on, the guy in front of me’s got the multishot flamethrower. I said, “Shoot that d—n thing.” He says, “Sir, at what? I can’t see anything.” I said, “Just shoot it.” He does, which kind of freezes the firefight between the rounds. And then we’ve got people up front in the point that were hit calling for a corpsman. And I mean there were just rounds coming in. The corpsman that’s working on me is the forward-most corpsman. They’re calling for him, and he’s looking at just all these rounds hitting in front of me. Literally the term bullet—swept or machine gun—swept applies, in front of him. I look

at him, I said, "Doc, they need you up there." And he says, "Aw, f—k." He runs up in all this fire. I put him in for a Bronze Star, and I put Slawinski in for a Bronze Star. He goes up and tends to them. And by now, I'm beginning to—the corpsman said before he left, "I can give you morphine." You know, the pain and all. When it first hit, the rounds, it felt like somebody took a hot towel, a hot, wet towel and slapped it across your back. And now I sort of had an achy feeling, and I was beginning to feel I was losing consciousness, just barely holding it. It was just sort of going in and out. So I told him, "No morphine." He says, "I don't want to give you morphine unless you really feel you want it, because when you get back, you've got to deal with it." So I said, "Forget the morphine." But I was beginning to lose consciousness, I felt. So I told Bob, I said, "If I lose consciousness, you've got to run the company from up here." My company XO had gone up to a position with General Trainor. He had flown with General Trainor to coordinate some of the logistics stuff, so he was up there. I told the platoon commanders that Bob would run the company. Since we were the forward-most platoon, we were in platoons in column. So they came up and everything, he would run it and the XO could come down or whatever, because I knew what was going to happen to me. And we couldn't get any medevac helicopters. I'd call in and give a sitrep to General Trainor, and I'd tell him what I thought we had in casualties, and I said, "I'm hit, too." Oh, he gets all excited and all. I said, "No medevac choppers because we have no zone and we're under fire." That's when the 46s show up, the medevac choppers, and I got upset with them. They said, "We're here just to tell you we're here. Whenever you want us, we'll come in." I told Bob, "I may lose consciousness because I feel myself going in and out, and if I do, you've got

to run the company. Here's what you do, get everybody up to the line, seize this ridgeline, and before you can make it ready to go down there." I just began to know that I wasn't going to be able to—and what I'm describing is going on over a couple hours.

Allison: Oh, it is? Okay.

Zinni: So finally the firing ceases. I think because we had taken a piece of the high ground, the higher end of the ridge, and we had now kind of straightened our lines, they had begun to withdraw down the other side. But there was still the odd shot. There was still because it was thick terrain, the odd enemy guy here and there. So the gunny comes up and he says—the 1st Platoon, platoon sergeant, Staff Sergeant Lambert comes up, and he says, "We got a place I think we can evacuate people from." What it was is in the back there was a ridge, a really steep ridge. And one of the techniques that had been used in the mountains, the 46s actually backed up to the edge of the ridge and lowering the ramp and kind of hovering there, and you could walk them on. There was just a little opening that we could do that; the pilots could do that. So we brought everybody back there. They were trying to figure out how to get me down. I said I'm going to walk down, because I had to walk past all the troops and everything. Of course their eyes are this big watching the company commander hit. But I wanted to walk down, but I sort of needed a little help. So the 1st platoon commander, Bob Meyers, he kind of helped down. I got down there, and we had our wounded there.

Allison: How many were there?

Zinni: Well I think in the end we ended up with two killed and nine wounded.

Allison: In your company?

Zinni: Yes. And we had some, actually, there were some Viet Cong and my Kit Carson scout was shot, too, through the shoulder and hit. So we'd come down to the landing zone and I see Loi. He has got an M16, and he's out sort of in no-man's land. And I said to Staff Sergeant Lambert, "Staff sergeant, what's this story?" One of the ITT guys had given him a weapon. I'm looking at him and he's sort of got this, he's halfway between—and he's yelling. They know I'm here. They called my name. And he's sort of trying to—I'm looking at his eyes like he's trying to make this decision which way to go.

Allison: Like sneaking off.

Zinni: I said to Staff Sergeant Lambert, "Get the weapon off him and get him back here." So Staff Sergeant Lambert walks out and he sees him coming to get the M16. Staff Sergeant Lambert had a shotgun, jacks the round in the shotgun, and he dropped the weapon. So they bring Loi back in and get him. So now the higher headquarters in the rear saying, "We've got to get him out of there."

Allison: Who, Loi?

Zinni: Yes, Loi. We've got to get him out. Get him out. He's too valuable and all this stuff. So the helicopters backed in. Some of the Viet Cong popped up—later I was to find out that there was one guy with an RPG [rocket propelled grenade] ready to take a shot at the helicopter, and a Marine saw him and fired at him and he went down. So they back up the helicopter. By now—and it was monsoon season, so it was cold. It was okay during the day. It was overcast and cool, and from the loss of blood I was beginning to shiver. So I get into the helicopter, we come into the helicopter, the wounded, and immediately the corpsmen in the helicopter, the medevac corpsman, he

puts me down on a rack on my stomach and takes off the battle dressing to look at it.

Of course, now it's just blood all over the place.

Allison: You had been bleeding quite a bit?

Zinni: Oh, yes. And he takes off—he has one of those flight jackets that are like, it was brand new. It had all those like white fleece linings. And of course I'm shivering there, and he's putting it over me. I said, "You're going to mess up your jacket." He said, "Sir, I don't care," and he puts it around me, and we take off. We come back into the 85th Evac Hospital in Da Nang, and we land. It's like that scene from MASH where all the nurses run out and everything. They bring us in and they put you on a slab like a table—like a slab. They got all these slabs in there, and they've got all the wounded up there. And they begin cutting all your clothes off. You're there completely buck-naked. The nurses are in there—because now there's some Vietnamese, and they say, "Who are they?" They're treating the Vietnamese really nice and all. "Who are these Vietnamese?" I said, "Those are Viet Cong." They're throwing straps over them and everything, but they're all shot up. And they're throwing straps over my Kit Carson scout and I said, "Wait a minute, he's okay." "Well who is he?" I said, "He's a Kit Carson scout." "What's a Kit Carson scout?" "Well it's a former Viet Cong . . . " "Eh . . . " "No, he used to be Viet—he's okay now. He's okay." *[laughter]* So now they take my word for it, but now I'm really feeling that I'm on my . . . kind of like the last bit of consciousness, obviously because of blood loss and everything else. So the doctor comes in right away. Looks at me. He said, "We got to get you X-rayed right away." So they rush me in. They do this X-ray. He comes out and he says, "You still have rounds in you." So we went right in to the operating room. So they bring me up, prep

me up, bring me in the operating room. Obviously now they've got IVs and everything in me. I'm laying there on my stomach, and this Army nurse comes in. She takes this chair, sort of turns it around with the back of the chair facing me, sits down in it so she's looking eyeball to eyeball as I'm on this operating table. She said, "We need to explain something to you. Do you understand me very clearly?" I said, "Yes, I do." She says, "We have an experimental drug here called ketamine. It's never been used here before on a human being. We have it here, and we'd like to use it on you. We wanted to use it on an officer so afterward we can get an assessment of the drug and its effect."

And I said, "I don't know, what do you want me to tell you?" She says, "Look, the advantages to ketamine are that we don't have to put tubes down your throat, because it's the kind of injury where it's going to be a lot easier than shoving tubes down your throat and doing everything else since you're going to be operated on, on your stomach and all." I'm saying, "Well, that sounds good." She said, "But ketamine is a hallucinogen." It was like LSD and all that. She was explaining this stuff and by now I'm barely—I said, "Look, do what you got to do." So they give me this stuff. Holy cow, I mean it is—you talk about a bad trip. This is like going through a nightmare but actually having lived it and remember it. I mean it was scary. You think you've died and all this other stuff, and I'm in horror. So I wake up with my wrists strapped down and everything else. I wake up and a whole time I'm on the—I'm sort of coming in and out of consciousness after this, so it's actually through the course of an entire day. I kept feeling something squeezing my hand, squeezing my hand. When I wake up, it was my first sergeant. He had come back. He was in there with me.

Allison: Alls?

Zinni: Alls. Yes, yeah. He had tears in his eyes, and he explained who was killed, who was wounded and everything else. And the nurse says to me, “He’s been here for 24 hours by your side holding your hand.” So, pretty emotional. So I come out of this and I’m put on a ward, and I’m basically on my stomach. I have no use of my left hand. I had this huge bandage on my entire back. The doctor comes in to explain. He says, “What we have to do here because the infection rate’s so high, we debride the wound. What that means is, we just cut everything away. We had cut 1/3 of the muscle tissues in your back away and your side. And we won’t close the wound here. You’ll be here for a number of days,” which turned out to be seven, “and then you’re going to go. Since you’re a Marine, you’ll go to Guam.” He says, “Look, I’ve got to tell you, I don’t think you’ll have use of your left hand, and I think you’re going to have some serious disability.” So, oh, s—t, you know. I’m laying there, and the medics come in, and they—I’m on my stomach and they say, “We need to change your dressing.” And there’s two of these guys, and they’re looking at me like this is a big event. And I said, “Well what’s happening?” He says, “Sir, there’s no easy way to do this. We’ve got to rip the dressings off your wound. You have a big wound and this is going to hurt, but there’s no way to do this.” And they both grab an end of the dressing and they rip it off. I have never been through so much pain in my life. They did that twice a day and I have to grab the end of the bed while they rip this off. When they came in to do it, all the ambulatory patients in the ward would leave *[laughter]*.

Allison: They didn’t want to watch?

Zinni: I had a soldier next to me looking at me. He had been shot in the leg. He had a minor

wound. He said, “Man, you got to see your back. You’re really screwed up.”

[laughter]

Allison: That’s really good for morale.

Zinni: While I was in there, the nurse came to me and said, “You know the Vietnamese soldier that was evacuated with you?” I said, “You mean my Kit Carson scout?” She said, “Yes. We’re losing him.” I said, “What do you mean you’re losing him? His wound was in his shoulder, it didn’t seem to . . . “ She said, “Yes, he’s lost part of his deltoid and all but it’s not a life threatening wound. But he’s just quitting.” And this triggered the whole thing about the Vietnamese fatalism—he just has lost his will to live. They’re trying to find his family and everything else, but the guy’s checking out. I said, “Look, can you bring him here next to me in the bed?” She said, “Well we don’t bring Vietnamese in this ward, it’s just for U.S.” I said, “Could you do it? Because I think I can help with this.” So they bring him in. They put him next to me. Somehow, I knew you have to whack him. You have to talk to him. Tell him you’re going to live, it’s all right, and just be on him all the time. So they bring him in. I’m doing this. And finally they had located his family. When his family came in, he sort of snapped out of it. But I saw that grey pallor, and I recognized that shock.

Allison: That fatalism?

Zinni: Yes, the shock. They would just go into shock. Well that’s what led to the shock, that sense of fatalism, I’m going to die, and you had to bring him out of it. So from there I go to—I get evacuated to the Philippines for a day, and then I go on to Guam. And when I get to Guam, I go in and they’re doing sort of the triage, and the doctor comes through looking at all the casualties. We’re all laid out. We had just come off the

plane. And the corpsman comes up—one of the corpsmen comes up to me as the doctors are going down the beds. We were all thrown into in this big ward, and he said, “See this doctor coming down here? He’s the finest surgeon in the United States Navy. I’m going to tell you, you will not get a better surgeon and he’s going to be operating on you.” So he comes down. The guy’s got a big cigar, kind of a rough, gruff guy. He looks at me, and he says, “Take the bandage off,” to the corpsman. So I grab the end of the bed like this, and he said, “What the hell are you doing?” And I said, “Well, you’re going to rip off the bandages. I’ve been through this seven days twice a day.” He says, “You’ve got to be kidding me.” So they give me a shot in each shoulder, and whatever it was, you’re kind of really relaxed. And then the corpsman takes this solution and squirts it over—now, this bandage has been on me for two days. And he squirts it on then he leaves it there for a minute or two, then he just picks it right up right off of my back *[laughter]*. I said, “Wait a minute, why don’t we give this technology to those in Vietnam?” So he looks at the wound. He’s looking at it. He’s kind of nodding up and down. So then I’m telling him, “Well, the doctor told me in Vietnam I’m going to lose use of my left hand.” He said, “You know, you’ve lost a lot of muscle tissue, but what I’m going to try to do, I’ve got to close your wound like this, in levels. I will attach some muscles, looking at this, there aren’t the muscles that would normally operate your left arm or do other things, but I believe I can cross attach muscles and things that could actually get you back to normal, or reasonably back to normal. You’re going to have to do a lot of physical therapy, going to really have to work out, develop those muscles. But I think I can pull it together. Our biggest problem’s going to be that wound’s going to want to pull apart and the danger of

infection. We're going to have to give you massive doses of penicillin. As a matter of fact, so much that in the future you may be resistant to penicillin." That happened, by the way. So that sounded great. Now he's telling me he can do all this. So they give me a day to sort of rest. Then they're rolling me into the operating room, and I'm feeling encouraged by this. Almost déjà vu, they roll me up, I'm on the operating table, face down, this big Navy nurse comes in, puts the chair just the same way that the Army nurse did. She was a commander, and the Army nurse back there was a lieutenant colonel. She looks at me, and she says, "We have an experimental drug here called ketamine. We've never used it before. We'd like to use it on you. So we need to understand how this works and all." I said "No way. I mean, I went through hell with that thing. It was like a nightmare. I don't want to use it." And she said, "Well, here's the deal. We have an 8-year-old girl here in the hospital in Guam. She's a burn victim, 80 percent of her body. We're going to have to operate on her. We have no other choice but to use ketamine. We're going to have to do it fairly quick, and we wanted this experience. I said, "Okay."

So they used the ketamine, but this time it's like a happy experience. I come out of this thing really feeling great. So when they were asking me about the effects of ketamine and what I thought, I said, "You know, when I went into that first operation, I didn't know what was going to happen, whether I was going to live or die and troops that were killed and wounded and just off the battlefield. I think going in, in that mental state caused sort of this bad [experience]."

The only thing I could attribute it to, I said it's an opinion, going in here because of what the doctor said and everything, which actually panned out right, was a positive

state of mind.

Allison: You were encouraged.

Zinni: I said, "I think that has an effect." And when I came out—obviously I was there for over 30-some days, over a month in the hospital, and they were doing all this work on me. You began to feel more confident. I began to have use of this arm. The doctor says, "Your nervous system is all mixed up. You will have strange reactions." Which I still do to this day. For example, if I back up into something, like something pokes me in the back, I'll feel it in the front. It's kind of weird. The only aftereffects, though, in the long term—and I needed to lift weights and do other things to develop the muscles, because they were small muscles trying to do big jobs and all. But it all worked out just the way he said it. The only effect I have is if I stand for long periods of time I begin to ache in my back, but if I sort of get a good night's sleep or whatever, it goes away. So there was never really any great effect. From there, I went to—I wanted to go back. I wrote to General Trainor, called him. Colonel Leftwich was killed. General Trainor was taken out of 1/5 and given recon battalion. I told him I was going to do everything I could to get back. He said, "If you come back, I'll put you in recon battalion." So the doctor wanted me to go through these months of physical therapy. He wanted to send me back to the states. He says, "You've got to go back home. You're in no condition . . . " And I said, "I want to go back to Vietnam." The doctor just very, very reluctantly said, "I don't really want to do this, but you've got to promise me you'll do all the physical therapy on your own." So he releases me from the hospital with full duty.

Allison: About when was that, sir? You were wounded November 3d.

Zinni: Yes. This was about Christmastime.

Allison: Okay. About six weeks.

Zinni: Yeah, maybe around New Year's time.

Allison: Oh, okay. Almost eight weeks in Guam.

Zinni: Yes. And so I got back to Okinawa and General Trainor says to me, "I've got a spot for you here as platoon commander in recon." And I get to Okinawa and I go through processing, and I walk in. I say, "I'm here. I'm going back to Vietnam." And the officer says, "You're not going back to Vietnam." I said, "What do you mean?" He says, "Sir, they just passed the rule from FMFPac. All those who have been evacuated out of theater over 30 days will not go back. So you're not eligible to go back." So, then I said, "Okay, well, send me home." "No, you've been released to full duty. You're not going home." *[laughter]* Catch-22. I said, "Well, what do you mean?" He said, "You're going to be reassigned here to finish out your tour in Okinawa." So I said, "Jeez. Okay, 3d Marine Division." "No, sir, the other part of the regulation says you can't be assigned to a deployable unit." He says, "Just go back to the BOQ, and we'll figure out a place for you to go." So I'm here a couple days in the BOQ really down. I run into a friend of mine. At that time [Robert H.] Barrow was in command of Camp Butler. A friend of mine was in the G-3 there. He knew I was there. He came over to see me. He says, "Hey, how'd you like to be the G-3 training officer for Camps Smedley Butler at the base and the training and everything here in the ranges and all." So I said that sounds pretty good. So he says, "Well, I'll set it up." Meantime, the order comes down that says too late, you've already been assigned. You're going to 3d Force Service Regiment, 3d FSR. I said, "What's that?" He said, "That's the

logistics command. You're going down to Camp Foster."

So that's where I headed. I don't know if you want to get into Camp Foster or if we should save it for next time.

Allison: Probably save it to next time, sir. That had to come within just millimeters of your spine if it was coming through your back there.

Zinni: Yes. I still have pieces in me—they took out the rounds. I have the rounds they took out. I saved one of them. There are still pieces of the jacket and all but you get like a hardened tissue around it. But you can see them on X-rays once in a while. So I got to leave in a stretcher in an airplane both times.

Allison: Well, sir, that sounds pretty much like the end of Vietnam for you.

Zinni: That's Vietnam.

End of Session III

UNITED STATES MARINE CORPS HISTORY DIVISION

Oral History Interview

Interviewee: General Anthony C. Zinni

Date: 23 March 2007

Length: 2:03:35

Interviewer: Dr. Fred H. Allison

SESSION IV

Allison: This is a fourth session of the interview with General Anthony Zinni, and today's date is 23 March 2007. Today I would like to talk about the decade of the 1970s, post-Vietnam. This was a time many see as a bottoming out after Vietnam and all that that entailed, and there starts to be a rebuilding process and laying a foundation of what the Marine Corps is today, the new modern Marine Corps as it's developed after Vietnam.

Zinni: Yes, I think the Vietnam War, combined with some of the social issues we were facing with the civil rights movement and the racial problems that were affecting our society, of course spilled over into the military. It was a time when drugs were becoming prevalent in society, and of course, the military wasn't immune. So you sort of had, after this long period of the Vietnam War that wasn't supported in the end by the people, a sense of antimilitarism; a Marine Corps that exploded in size. We obviously had the draft along with the other services, the Army, and we ended up having at the end of that to go through a period of reshaping the military. We were out of Vietnam. We had to look toward what the future held. We had to rebuild the kind of military we needed. We had to really focus on some serious leadership problems that we had in the military and challenges that we had to deal with. And I think it was also a time when the military maybe wasn't looked upon as a viable place for people to come into. We suffered from programs like Secretary of Defense McNamara's Project 100,000, where

we took the lowest mental category people into the military. We had people that were really, at that time, you had to consider unfit for military duty because of that, and because of the stresses of Vietnam and the numbers. So as we were pulling out of Vietnam, we had to deal with all these problems, and we had to restructure the military, and the Marine Corps wasn't immune from that. So the one thing we had going for us, I think, we had Commandants like General [Robert H.] Barrow, who said we will not compromise on standards. I saw where, maybe a case in some other services where they lessened or lowered standards to try to get by. Although the other services basically went through the same thing and had to reshape their militaries, but General Barrow wanted to do it in tough times as all our Commandants then wanted to do it without compromising on standards, which made the leadership challenge even greater, but it was the right thing to do.

Allison: Okay, sir, we'll talk about details of that shortly. Before we do, the last thing we talked about was you were wounded in Vietnam and you were being evacuated out of the country, back to Guam. I wonder if you remember receiving—getting the Purple Heart pinned on you in the airplane that you were being medevaced from.

Zinni: Actually I got it in the Hospital in Da Nang.

Allison: Okay.

Zinni: Yes. The first tour when I came out, is when I think what you're alluding to, was when I was ill. I was sick and medevaced back. We landed in Hawaii and then General [Victor H.] Krulak, the senior General Krulak who was commanding general, Marine Forces in the Pacific, came on the plane, and no matter what time of day or night he greeted every plane that had wounded Marines going back to the states and came

aboard and talked to each one of us individually. And in those days there were a lot of wounded coming back through there.

Allison: End of '67?

Zinni: It was at the end of '67. At the end of '70, I was . . .

Allison: You were in a hospital in Da Nang.

Zinni: I was in a hospital in Da Nang, and I had just had the operation, and I was in pretty bad shape, and General [Thomas H.] Miller, who was deputy commanding general, of the 3d Marine Amphibious Force came down and pinned on my Purple Heart in the hospital.

Allison: Roger, he told me about it but said he gave it to you on the airplane.

Zinni: No, no, it was in the hospital. Of course, I'm laying on my stomach because my wounds on my side and my back, and he just said to lay there and he pinned it on, and I just didn't want to see a Purple Heart laying on my stomach. And it took me about—it took me a good amount of time just to be able to get myself up and sit up. I've got a picture of it that he signed—a Polaroid, and I could see in his face he was going to—Oh God, this is hard, and he pinned it on me in the hospital there. And then I went on to Guam and spent a little over a month there.

Allison: We talked about in the last session, your recovery then assignment to the 3d Force Service Regiment in Okinawa? Let's pick up the narrative there.

Zinni: While I was in Guam, I read this article. It was kind of in the back pages of the, then, *Navy Times*, covered the Navy and Marine Corps—and it said Alpha One Five finds a big food cache, you know, so many tons of rice and some odd weapons, and I thought, "That's all we got out of this?" You know, it just seemed so strange. I was to find out

later from General [Bernard E.] Trainor and then even a few years later when I was back in the United States and up at Headquarters Marine Corps and saw then-General Trainor . . . took me in to the Marine Corps intelligence section and there were classified files that what we had discovered when we went down the other side of that hill. We had killed something like 40 to 50 of the NVA that were on top of the hill, and we also ended up with the largest intelligence cache and find of the entire Vietnam War. And there were documents that fingered the mayor of Da Nang and police chief as Viet Cong, and dossiers on all of them. So it turned out to be a major find. And as I was writing to General Trainor . . . sensed that something bigger had happened, later to find out obviously because of the classification nobody would publicly talk about it.

I really wanted to get back to my unit very badly, so I went from the doctor telling me that I was going to be medevaced back to the states, have to go through a serious physical therapy program—I was able to really pressure the doctor to try to let me go back. He was reluctant to do it, but he wanted me to—you know, he said if I do this, you've really got to continue to work out, explained to me about massive scar tissue and the other problems I would have. So I made my way back to Okinawa, and I communicated with General Trainor who now had become the commanding officer of 1st Recon Battalion on the death of Lieutenant Colonel [William G.] Leftwich. And it looked like I could get in the 1st Recon. But when I got to Okinawa, I ran into this catch that if you've been medevaced out of country over 30 days you could not go back.

Allison: But you couldn't go home, either.

Zinni: I couldn't go home, because they had cleared me for active duty, back to full duty. And

I found out further I couldn't even go to the 3d Marine Division that was now out of Vietnam and back on Okinawa because I couldn't go to a deployable unit.

Third FSR was recouping. They were trying to recover all this stuff from Vietnam for years. They were rehabilitating it. They had major logistics requirements. But they were not considered a deployable unit even though they were the logistics piece of what now would be III MEF [Marine Expeditionary Force]—in those days [it] was part of the division/wing team on Okinawa, and logistics team on Okinawa. So I ended up being told I would go down to Camp Foster. This was at Camp Hague where they processed everybody who was coming in and out. I would be going to Camp Foster. And I was kind of down. I had thought that at least—I had run into a friend that I might be the training officer at Camp Butler, which sounded like it might be at least something to do with training and operations. And then to know I was going down to the 3d FSR, to logistics command. What am I going to be doing down there, as an infantry captain? Now I'm not even going to go home to see my family. So it seemed like the worst of all worlds, so I wasn't too thrilled.

Allison: What was the situation there?

Zinni: I received my orders at Camp Hague. They gave me new orders and they told me—of course, I didn't have anything, personal effects. I just had sort of the kit that the Red Cross gives you—shaving kit and the basic toiletries, and this whole time I had been basically in hospital pajamas and robe. When I got there, they paid me and I was able to go over to the PX at Camp Hague and buy a sports shirt and a pair of slacks and that's about all and some skivvies and that sort of thing. So they gave me the orders and I had no uniforms or anything, but they said to just go down and report in down

there, go to cash sales get what you need down there. So it was—by the time I got my orders and everything done, it was fairly late. It was like maybe 1900 something like that. It was dark. And the way to get to Camp Foster was to go outside the main gate and get one of those little skoshi cabs and just go down to Camp Foster. So I decided to do that, because they had checked me out of the holding unit at Camp Hague. And I get into the cab and tell the cab driver I want to go down to Camp Foster. So we're driving down through Koza City, and I could see in the horizon what looked like flames and fire and all this stuff, and as we were getting closer I was hearing all this commotion. And all of a sudden we just come upon all these cars burning and people running around with these red headbands. As I would later find out, this was the Okinawan Communists that used to stage these huge demonstrations. And as we were going by, I saw burning military police cars, U.S. military police cars, and later to find out some 85 cars were burned. A lot of military police cars. In those days this was still under U.S. control. The military governor of Okinawa was an Army general officer. And as we're driving down the street they see me in the back of the cab and they start coming after the cab like a mob and the little driver wheels it around and must do 90 miles an hour down some back alleys and we run into another mob and I'm bouncing around in the back of the cab trying to figure out what's happening, and he said, "Don't worry, I'll get you through this."

Allison: They really didn't like Americans.

Zinni: Well, the Communists didn't, but this little cab driver fortunately did. So we whisk around and he finally gets me to what was the back gate of Camp Foster, but the demonstrators were out there in force, and I could see all these Marines with face

shields and shields and batons and their weapons, and the demonstrators are attacking them and throwing things at them. Had these long poles with padded stuff on the end of it and they sort of ran into the lines. So he gets me as close as he can. He lets me out. Of course I gave him a big tip, because he got me through all this, and I kind of dash through the lines there and this was my introduction to 3d FSR. And so I check in the next day . . .

Allison: Wow, you thought you were through with combat. What was happening on base?

Zinni: Well when I got there, I checked in and obviously was told that I was going to be the company commander of Headquarters and Service Company Supply Battalion, 3d FSR.

Allison: This is the predecessor of an FSSG [force service support group], right?

Zinni: This is the predecessor of FSSG. FSR. Force Service Regiment.

Allison: Which is a predecessor of MLG, Marine Logistics Group.

Zinni: Yes. So it's just three removed. I get assigned as the H&S company commander. It was—the times in Okinawa then were really hard. I mean, the racial problems, the relationship with the Okinawans who were much more hostile people, I realize now, because of the communist movement, there were demonstrations, there were drugs, there were all sorts of issues there. A lot of Marines being processed out that were taken out of Vietnam who were there in Okinawa. And the situation, the morale and everything, just was not good. I was really upset that I wasn't going back to Vietnam. I was fortunate in that I had a lieutenant as an executive officer who was a really good officer, a mustanger [former enlisted Marine]. And I had a tremendous first sergeant who actually became a sergeant major, named J. J. Carroll. And he was a great Marine.

And I had a great gunnery sergeant, later to become a sergeant major, a gunnery sergeant named Jackson. So I had this great team, and they told me about the leadership challenges they had, you know, H&S company is sort of a kluged together team. We had the cooks, the bakers, the computer data processors, everything in there. And of course you have section leaders that put demands on them, you have the headquarters service demands, and sometimes there was friction there. All the leadership problems. But they convinced me. I thought the kind of advice they gave me—this is command, you are the commander, these Marines need your attention and leadership just as much if not more than your Marines in a rifle company in Vietnam. And I took that to heart. I wasn't happy about being there. I'd admit my own personal morale was low; I was still recovering from my wounds and not able to get back to my unit, faced with all these challenges, being in a unit that I was unfamiliar with, but they convinced me that you put your heart and soul into this. Leadership is necessary, and I really looked at it as an opportunity maybe to learn something about logistics. You know, I really felt that, well here's an opportunity. I'm in a part of the Marine Corps I might not ever be in, one that you don't think much about as the young company grade officer in the infantry, and so I really wanted to figure out the operational end of this, and the mission and things that were done. The battalion commander and the regimental commander, I think, liked that. They were re-establishing some units, so I actually had a double command. They put me in charge of the bulk fuel company that they were rebuilding that had been in cadre in Vietnam, so I got into that business. Bulk fuel, I had no knowledge of that. This was the embryonic stages of data processing. We had a data processing unit so I was trying to understand what that was

all about. The functions of supply. But I have to say that the leadership problems were almost overwhelming. And it wasn't long after I was there at that I began to see one of the problems that was plaguing all of the Marine Corps. Maybe even worse in places like Okinawa, and that was the racial issues. And we had a huge race riot. There were always racial tensions. There were always incidents, something would happen at the mess hall. There would be fights or battles. In this one incident, I get a call in the middle of the night that there's a big race riot. The camp guard has called out the MPs. The guard kind of folds under all this. In those days, there were gangs within the military that were out in the streets. There were parts of Koza you couldn't go into unless you were a certain race. There were black areas, white areas, Hispanic areas, and you didn't go into them. A place called "the Bush," you know, which was a black area. There were gangs like the Mao-Mao's, the Bush Masters, there were Ku Klux Klan. So it was a really bad time. When this riot happened and again on a large scale, the guard just basically folded. The military police couldn't control it. It was a horrible night. I went back in and grabbed all my people in H&S Company got them all inside, locked the doors, kept them in, talked to them, and was proud that none of my people participated. A lot of people felt strongly about the issues. I had sympathies on different sides in the company and all, but we tried to talk through it—this was before human relations and all the other things to try to mitigate this really came out. And so the next day, and I had been there just a short while, I would say a month, and this happens. And the next night as they're sort of picking up the pieces of this, the camp guard, which was a thrown-together organization, had fallen apart. In those days, the 3d Marine Division had a rifle company that had to come down to handle these kinds

of missions of riot control and everything else. And they had sent a company down. I knew the company commander, and I talked to him. He was saying, you go on this sort of mission alert in Okinawa, it [his company] could go anywhere to do this. So I thought, this is a terrible time. I mean, this is Marine on Marine. And that evening, in the officer's club as people were trying to piece together what happened, I mean the BOQ had been attacked and everything else. I said, "Well, if I could fix this thing, I would form a guard in a way that was responsive and tough and wouldn't take crap from any element of this," and all. Well whoever overheard me told the commanding officer of 3d FSR. So the next morning I found myself standing in front of his desk and he says, and his name was Colonel Raider, pretty tough old guy, and he said, "I understand captain, that you think you can fix all this and that you think the problems back here are leadership and the guard and all this." I thought I was in for a butt chewing or something. And I said, "Yes, sir. I should apologize for letting my mouth run away from me." And he says, "Well you're the new guard officer. You're the commander of the guard." And he said, "I want you to . . ." He says, "If you've got ideas," he says, "Look, we're open to it. This has been a significant challenge and a problem." And he says, "I want you to think about this, come back in a couple of days, and tell me what you would do to fix this." So I thought about it, and I figured you've got to create a guard that commands respect. The guard ought to be integrated. I wanted every representation. I wanted black, Hispanics, Samoans, whites, you name it. It needed to reflect all that. I asked if I could recruit them personally. I wanted to interview every member of the guard. I wanted them all over six feet and over 200 pounds. I was the only one that wasn't—I was over 200 pounds, but not over six feet—

but I wanted big guys. Gunny Jackson, who was my gunny, had just come from a physical fitness academy, and he had been a drill instructor and on the Marine Corps Rifle Team, he was at Physical Fitness Academy, Quantico. I wanted him to be one of my guard chiefs. There was an officer who had just reverted back to master sergeant named Dick DeCosta. He was the Marine Corps heavyweight judo champ. And he was I think in motor transport, so he was there. I asked for him, so I had two guard chiefs, I had Jackson who was built like Arnold Schwarzenegger, and I had DeCosta . . .

Allison: Plus, Jackson was black . . .

Zinni: Jackson was black and DeCosta was Portuguese. And what I liked about DeCosta, too, is he had spent almost his whole career in the Far East. His wife was Oriental, he had spent almost his whole time there . . . so Colonel Raider gave us the go ahead, and I interviewed, and what I was looking for was people that wanted to be on the guard, were very mature. I was told that if you do this and it's all volunteer, you won't get blacks, which wasn't true. I had black NCOs that really felt that we had to retain order to the standards of the Corps. In some cases they wanted to join the guard because they felt that if they had to do what they had to do, they were best suited to do it to make sure it was done in a measured way—that's what I wanted to hear. So we recruited this guard. I went into this training. I asked this friend of mine who was a company commander, had been through all the riot control training with 3d Marine Division, to talk to me about lesson plans for the training, you know, riot formations, all this business. We began to do this training. Then I decided that I wanted the guard to be very visible. So we would PT every day and run through all the barracks areas and everything. See the size of the guard, how big they were, how motivated they were. We

would do all our riot control training out on the grinder where everybody could see it in the barracks. See the formations, hear us do the yelling, and use the formation tactics. I had one of the fire trucks fitted with a bladder that had this violet dye, and we drew the water from the Benjo ditches. We sprayed the target barrels with it. If you get sprayed with this, it didn't wash off, so you could identify rioters the next day in the barracks.

Allison: Plus you wouldn't smell too good.

Zinni: Plus a lot of these gangs had paraphernalia, jackets and berets and things, so you know, it was a way of affecting just the image. And we did some martial arts training. Of course, we went down to the Naha Police Force and Demonstration Force and their dojo, and some of the stuff they did like their stick fighting had applications with our use of batons. So we really got into getting the guard up and motivated to handle the demonstrations, again because of the Okinawan communist movement and then the internal problems. We went through a series of tests. I was counting every third night there would be an incident. We had cross burnings by KKK. We had race riots. Something would go on in a mess hall. I tried to convince the officers of the day from the units not to try to handle the problems themselves. Turn it right over to the guard. I mean, one thing I learned is you go in with force—sort of the Powell Principle. You go in with overwhelming force right away so it doesn't explode. If you do it piecemeal, it gets out of control.

Allison: The Colin Powell Doctrine.

Zinni: This was a forerunner. And we had a number of incidents. The guard responded, the guard did well, the guard held together, and pretty soon it stopped at Camp Foster. I made the guard very visible. We were on patrols. Each of the incidents that happened,

some we handled well, some maybe not so well, but we always handled them in a way that was fair. I tried to make sure all my patrols were integrated patrols so there was one of everything out there. The watches were designed that way, too. The guard became very close-knit. They had their own liberty spots out in town. They hung out. I was beginning to get all sorts of requests. People wanted to be part of the guard. It really reflected the ability to get along. I mean I had my Marines, regardless of ethnic background and the racial background, were integrated on liberty and everything else. We did the first of the human relations training . . .

Allison: Did you? That came in at that time?

Zinni: It came in at that time. There was a lot of controversy. A lot of people didn't accept it. I think many Marines felt that this is Leadership 101. We can handle it. We don't need that. I decided to embrace it for better or worse. To me, it wasn't perfect, but I liked the idea that it allowed a forum to discuss issues. We certainly had it in the guard, and there were people that came in with those issues. People had questions about them. And so what I thought was healthy about it was this sort of openness. That whites or blacks or Hispanics or whoever could say, "I've got to get something off my chest. I've got to say it." And so we had a forum for doing that to work it out.

Allison: You didn't think it threatened the rank structure or the deference for authority or that sort of thing?

Zinni: I think it could have.

Allison: Because that was a common objection to it.

Zinni: Yes, I mean it's like anything else. It was a tool. If the tool was used by the chain of command and it was used within the chain of command, it seemed to me it helped. It

added to it. It didn't replace good leadership. If it became something outside the chain of command, it worked against the chain of command. I saw in some units they didn't like it. They hated it. It was done because it had to be done. It wasn't part of the chain of command. So then you get the people moving around the chain of command. I learned a lot about this in that tour of duty. The first thing I learned is I began to look at where were we having the trouble, what units. And I began to see that the troublemakers, regardless of what background they were, tended to come from specific units, by and large with an exception here and there. But if you're going to look at a block of people that caused trouble, they were in specific units.

Allison: It wasn't necessarily race or socioeconomic background or whatever?

Zinni: No. And I've got to tell you that the units in that regiment that had strong leadership didn't, they might have had some problems, everybody was having problems, but they were minor. The ones with major problems were where you had the weak leadership, where the leaders weren't that good. I mean it was a direct correlation. It was made and—it was the observation of all of us, it was the observation of my guard officers, who used to stand watch every night. And I took a turn at the watch, too. I had two lieutenants and my guard chief and my watch NCOs. But you know, you could say, "Well there goes X unit now." We knew right away. I could tell you where the problems were going to be. And eventually though, I think we drove the problem off of Camp Foster. It just became that anybody that wanted to cause trouble that was looking for a reason to create an event or a demonstration or a riot realized they were not going to do it at Camp Foster, because it's likely you're going to get your butt kicked. And we aren't going to tolerate it, and we're going to get on it right away, and the guards

are going to handle it. And so we began to see the incidents sort of drop off and then eventually go away. As a matter of fact, some of the battalion commanders who were all supportive of me, gave me their best guys and volunteers, now they wanted them back, they wanted their people back. And I went to Colonel Raider and I said, “Don’t change it now.” And he agreed. He said, “We’re not changing anything. We’re not assuming anything went away other than the guard is what made it happen. The guard stays the way it is.” So to me, I learned a lot tactically. I learned a lot about tactics and about mobs and mob mentality. I really studied the manuals, talked to people that had experience in this thing. Even the Okinawan police and others. I was reading a lot about it, gaining experience from others that had been involved in it and were professional in it, as in the case of the Japanese police.

Allison: You’re getting that all-important knowledge, we’re talking about—it’s central for good leadership.

Zinni: But I’ve got to tell you, up to that point, leadership seemed to be common sense and something that was natural. And when I thought about the kinds of units that I’ve been in, that were basically all infantry or infantry training to that point, they weren’t diverse MOS units like these noncombat arms units. Leadership’s something you’ve got to work at. Sometimes the unit structure and the unit mission help you. Sometimes you don’t get any help there because your command is so spread out. And I really began to see that really good leadership does mitigate these problems. Certainly it’s not true that it gets rid of all problems. You certainly can’t account for a bad egg or two, or someone that is not going to respond to the leadership. But by and large, when you were talking about the numbers, I could clearly point to the weakest leaders and the

weakest units in terms of leadership. And there's where the problems were.

Allison: When you talk about weak leadership—I mean, what are some characteristics in a situation of a weak leader?

Zinni: Well I think some of the styles in some cases. We had very authoritarian leaders. They didn't relate to the troops. Old fashioned and obviously things were changing. Troops didn't respond to that. They were kind of the hard-nosed leaders, did not communicate well with the troops, were not approachable by the troops, did not really delve into the problems they were dealing with, did not understand the problems. I mean you're talking about racial problems, drug problems that to my generation and maybe the generations before me, certainly, these were new problems. We didn't grow up with that. We didn't encounter that like we were seeing now. So they didn't know how to respond to it. There were weak leaders. They were overwhelmed by this. They were actually afraid of this situation. Did not handle it well, did not have enough tact or understanding or firmness, just wanted no parts of it. And we had a lot of units that were highly technical units, and you had people there that had maybe a technical orientation. They were officers or NCOs but they were really in there because of the MOS and the MOS was technical. And this leadership responsibility, to be hands-on with the troops, is something that was either alien to them or they didn't have the experience or they just didn't really want to get in to that. So you had all sorts of reasons why the leadership may not have been what was necessary for that. It was a challenging time. You needed some tough leaders. It was a tough time, too. I mean, almost everybody—there were a few accompanied tours in those days in Okinawa. There was a handful there. The vast majority were unaccompanied. Many people didn't

particularly want to be there for a year. Certainly my morale wasn't high because I was in the worst of all situations. I wasn't back in Vietnam with my Marines, the way I felt, I wasn't back at home with my family, and I wasn't even in my MOS, and so my morale I had to keep working on, too. You know, you have to keep yourself pumped up. You don't want to find yourself in the O Club every night because there isn't much else to do. You work out, that's something you can do in the day. One thing that Dick DeCosta taught me, he said to me, "You know, you look at a lot of Marines that are here. They come here, and they spend the time in the O Club, and you drink too much and you get trapped in there. You don't appreciate that you're in a new culture, a different culture, and you don't go out and try to understand that culture. You sort of have this American view of them which is a negative and focus more on the bar streets and that sort of thing." And to me, it resonated because now I'm thinking back to my first tour in Vietnam and with the people. And Dick DeCosta really knew the environment. He had spent so much time in the Orient there, and like I said, he knew because of his martial arts a lot of people. And he said, "I'll show you a side of Okinawa most Marines don't see." And so he took me out to places—I got really wrapped into the history of the war there, the battles and all that. But more than that, he knew so many Okinawans. I got to meet many Okinawans. These are not the Okinawans you find in a bar, not the Okinawans working in the PX and that sort of thing, but really out with them in the culture and seeing a large part of what they were all about. And to me, that was sort of reawakening what I experienced in Vietnam in my first tour. And I thought, "Boy, I wasted my first weeks and months here doing what everybody else did," and now I was beginning to see there was something to learn

here. This was a new culture. I got into the history of Okinawa. I got to meet some really wonderful Okinawan people and got to then get a sense of their culture, too. So that part of it added to it, made it a tour that was difficult even better.

Allison: So you saw some real changes in the situation and the tension on base and whatnot.

Zinni: I wouldn't want to go through anything like that again.

Allison: Yes, you had mentioned this was the worst tour of your entire career. Do you still hold to that?

Zinni: Yes. I think, I guess as you get older you might say it's more challenging, but to me—you're not doing what you felt you joined the Marine Corps to do. You're not in your MOS. There's a war going on out there, there's a unit you left, and it was your guys in combat. You're not back with them and you can't get back. You're not with your family; you're in this horrible situation. So I think personally it was tough. The situation on the ground was a hard one to deal with. I was there for eight months and as time went on I began to adjust to it and I began to see that maybe there was even more responsibility required of you here. The people I felt most—I guess—sympathy for, is the number of combat arms lieutenants who thought they were headed to Vietnam. This is now at the end of the war. They thought they were going to do their time in Vietnam in the grunts, or artillery, or whatever.

Allison: Out of TBS and everything—

Zinni: They're out of TBS, shortstop them and send them to the 3d FSR. And they were in there to obviously fill in the sort of odd kinds of jobs, where they didn't have the MOSs they had—they were going to be the XOs of the companies and . . .

Allison: All these dreams and you know, idealism about going to combat and then they get this .

...

Zinni: I sort of tried to gather them up and relate to them in some way. But these were the lieutenants that just missed the war and were isolated in this spot. I had a couple of lieutenants in my guard unit, too, that came through like that. And some really, really good officers that came through. And while I was feeling sorry for myself, I saw these poor guys. I mean I had two tours in Vietnam. I had my war experiences if you will. These poor guys just missed it, and they thought they would have it. You know, there was some empathy there and I felt for them just the way I felt for myself.

Allison: You knew how the Marine Corps was supposed to be. You must have felt the like Marine Corps was coming apart.

Zinni: I was looking at my third kind of Marine Corps. I saw the Marine Corps before Vietnam . . .

Allison: Cold War Marine Corps.

Zinni: Yes, the Cold War Marine Corps that I joined, my first stop Camp Lejeune, before Vietnam cranked up. Then I saw the Vietnam Marine Corps. Now I was looking at the post-Vietnam Marine Corps. And you looked at three very different kinds of organizations in that sense. You looked at one that kind of, if you will, the old Corps, still looked like World War II, Korea, a lot of the leadership was still from that vintage. Then you have the Vietnam Marine Corps which was very different, adjusting to the war, a different kind of environment and what it went through there. I mean I think, given the circumstances and everything else, did extremely well. The toughest part of Vietnam, and I think, the toughest part of the fighting, I think the Marines distinguished themselves from the battles in the DMZ and Khe Sanh and Hue City, and

all that. And now you were looking at a Marine Corps that coming out the other end, for all the reasons I mentioned, was now in restructuring and rebuilding. That was the toughest. I had a lot of friends that got out. Many that just wanted to go on to something else. That challenge was just too much—it was difficult times and . . .

Allison: I think, terribly demoralizing.

Zinni: Yes. But I've got to say this. I would not want to go through that experience again. That was the toughest tour of duty I've ever had for all the reasons I mentioned, but I've got to tell you, I probably learned more there than anything else. Not so much about tactics or operations other than the riot control pieces but you really learned a lot about leadership. Leadership in crisis, leadership in hard times. To me, it was even a bigger challenge than leadership in combat. I mean leadership in combat, you know you've got a good unit, you trust them, you hope they trust you and respect your judgment and all that. But that environment was the most challenging in a leadership role.

Allison: Looking back on Vietnam and experiencing Vietnam and all, I wanted to ask you what is your favorite book, which book or maybe movie captures that experience the best? There is so much that misrepresents that experience in the media. Americans do not really understand Vietnam.

Zinni: You know it's strange, because in many wars, there're certain books or movies that really don't capture it. I became really disappointed in everything I read, even the most popular books that came out of there. Even some of those written by some of those out there, to me, never really captured it. At least for me. I don't know why. I mean, when I was student at Command of Staff College at Quantico, I wrote an article for the

[Marine Corps] Gazette where I basically said that all the books and movies, they don't get it. I was really disappointed.

Allison: You just kind of want to forget it?

Zinni: Yes, forget it, put it inside, which is wrong. I think maybe sometimes time has to pass and you have to reflect and look back. You've had movies that have either tried to glamorize it, which didn't work, they didn't come off—like it did maybe in the Second World War. You had movies that tried to play to the worst elements of it, like *Platoon*. *Platoon* might have been very accurate in a technical sense, because I think that the military advice might have been there, but it sort of took the worst things that ever happened in Vietnam and made it look like that was routine for every unit, which was an exaggeration. So it stretched it the other way. And then ridiculous ones. *Deer Hunter*—well, not only *Deer Hunter*. What was the one with the—*Apocalypse Now*. Those sorts of things. It's kind of sad, because I think to the average civilian, or average American, *Apocalypse Now*, in a way, represents the Vietnam War, because it's always touted as this great Vietnam War [movie]. And it just—wasn't. Vietnam was very different. Maybe it's because I was so immersed in the war. Maybe it was because I lived with the people and saw it from their end plus had the experience of the U.S. military. And in so much of my life, even while I was not there on the ground, was dedicated to prepare people for it, to study the war. I think there are books that sort of chronicle events fairly accurately. But nothing that really captures it, that had a sense of it. And that might be true of all wars, or books about war. I mean, when we look back now at the movies and books that came out of World War II, they had this overly naïve sort of glamorous heroic theme, but people who were actually on the ground

thought it was so hokey. Maybe nowadays we have the opposite problem. It becomes so ridiculous and drifts toward the other end, it doesn't capture it. Now, movies like *Saving Private Ryan* seem better.

Allison: Maybe that comes close to the actual combat.

Zinni: Well I think for World War II guys that were there, that seemed to resonate with them most. But I haven't seen the Vietnam one or read the one that really captured it.

Allison: What about Jim Webb's book, *Fields of Fire*? I've heard some people who were there say that that was a fairly accurate portrayal of it.

Zinni: Jim's a good friend of mine, and certainly I supported Jim in his campaign for Senate. And actually Jim was in 1/5 before I was there. When I got there, I'll tell you, they revered him. I mean, the troops still talked about him. He was a legend in the unit. I didn't know him but I knew him by reputation, and it was obvious that every award he received, he earned. But I still don't even think that got it for me.

Allison: Maybe for you experiencing Vietnam from one end to the other like you did. I mean, you don't capture Vietnam in a one-year tour in a relatively small place with a single set of experiences. Having seen the war from the Delta to the DMZ over two tours and seeing it with the people involved in it maybe gave you a depth that those things were more superficial and didn't seem to capture it to the levels that your experience led you to.

After this experience with the guard company and 3d FSR, did you consider getting out, after that, like so many did?

Zinni: No.

Allison: You determined that that was going to . . .

Zinni: Yeah. There were a lot of opportunities—at that time the job market was good. When I was in between tours in Vietnam, back at [Quantico] there were job fairs right outside the gate. I mean, people were after college graduates, especially with military experience and everything added. The pickings were good, but you know, I guess because the war was still on, even though U.S. troops were coming out. If you give me the chance, I sort of thought I'd get back there as an advisor or something. The whole experience now, even though it was draining, I mean, the leadership, the requirements, having gone from the experiences of the 2d Marine Division, and then the Vietnamese Marines, and then the Basic School, which was intense and hard, and worked long hours, and then back to Vietnam and Okinawa. I just felt that anything else I would do in life at this point could not measure up. If I ever had a doubt, it was taken away after that day I was shot. I mean, watching my Marines and their heroism and their performance and all, I think it's seeing them at the hospital laying there afterward and thinking about all that. I thought, "There's nothing else I could do in life." And my wife comes from military background. She loves the military. Her father's career was as a Navy officer. She has cousins and uncles that all served in the Marine Corps, Navy, Army, Air Force, and she liked the military life, and also I had a lot of support there. Even though, being young and our marriage being so young and I was gone most of the time. We got married in 1966, and here I've been gone for two years, well two one-year increments, not to mention the training and the field time when you're missing, and the exercises. So by this time, when I came back from Okinawa, we spent half our time married apart. She's raising two kids at this point. But she was still motivated and still liked the military.

Allison: Did you have any aspirations as to what you wanted to do, anticipating your next tour of duty?

Zinni: Yes, I really wanted another company. I mean, I had a company for a short time in 1/6 as a lieutenant. I had the infantry training regiment company. I had the company in Vietnam. I had two companies in Okinawa. So I had five companies at this point, and of course, I had been a platoon commander, and I just wanted another company, that's all I wanted. I can't remember if the monitors came out to Okinawa in their tour or what had happened, how the monitors asked me what I wanted to do, and really felt at this stage of the game after all I'd been through they were looking at putting me someplace where our little family could have some more home time—I wanted to go back to a division, and I asked for 2d Marine Division,

Allison: Going back to the East Coast?

Zinni: Or West Coast. But East Coast, my family was there, but I would have gone to the 1st Marine Division. But I said first choice, second, third choice—second choice, 1st Marine Division; third choice, Hawaii. Then the brigade was there. It was all infantry. That's always what my fitness reports look like. Vietnam was always number one, then the others.

Allison: In my research I saw where you requested Thailand. Do you remember that? It was between your tours or something.

Zinni: I don't remember Thailand. Must have been something there. I think it might have been because when the war was winding down, there were Marine units that were moved over to Thailand. So I asked for 2d Marine Division and the monitor said, "Nobody wants to go to the 2d Marine Division." I mean, they were having all the same sort of

experiences and had been drained, and they were rebuilding and but I said that's where I really want to go. So he said, "Okay." Assigns me to 2d Marine Division, so I was happy.

Allison: Was Bill Keys still a monitor, or somebody else was?

Zinni: No, Bill Keys wasn't the monitor then. I forget who the monitor was for infantry captains.

Allison: Okay, so you go there and you did get a company. Delta Company 1/8.

Zinni: Yes, I checked in to the division and the personnel officer looks at my record and he says, "Man, you need a break. You're married. You've got two kids," and he's looking at all the stuff I've been through, and he says, "You've gotta have a break." He says, "I'm going to assign you as the division education officer." So I just crapped all over him, and I said, "No way. I want to go down to a battalion. I want to get a company," and all this stuff. And he thought I was crazy. He said you're a glutton for punishment. So he assigned me to 1/8. I went down to the battalion and the battalion had a lot of captains in it. And I thought, boy, this is going to be pretty tough. And all the company commanders, in those days, there were three companies, they had eliminated the fourth company, a rifle company. And so when I got down there I thought, well how is this going to work out? And they had a three and a three alpha, and all the captains' seats were filled. Actually they had excess captains. And the battalion commander says, "Look, we have—Delta Company is in cadre right now, but it's going to be rebuilt." So he said, "I'm going to put you in Delta Company, you'll be the CO of Delta Company."

Allison: So this is the fourth company?

Zinni: This was their fourth. When I took it over, all I had was an XO and a first sergeant and a bunch of files. And we had to literally rebuild the company from scratch.

Allison: Which is not a bad thing.

Zinni: No, no, no. You know, not taking over somebody else's problems. At the time it was tough, the numbers were tough, we were processing a lot of Marines out at the time again, still going through the rebuilding. I was getting some—I got some really superb lieutenants and officers in, some really fine staff NCOs. The NCOs all had Vietnam experience, so it was great having them. You were getting some new troops in. And sometimes it was a numbers problem. I mean, as we were building up, going to the field, I remember going to the field with only 14 Marines. But I said we're going to do it, we're going to go through all this training, and slowly but surely, it built up. The company did—in those days we had a Caribbean deployment. So we were on the cycle for the Caribbean deployment. The BLT [battalion landing team] went out. It wasn't a MAU [Marine amphibious unit] or MEU [Marine expeditionary unit] in those days. It was the BLT. An air piece was on alert, but you went down on an LPD and an LSD and that sort of thing. We did six weeks in the Caribbean, six weeks back on alert ready to go back, and then six weeks back down again. So we did two pumps to the Caribbean. In those days, the British Royal Marines had a deployment to the Caribbean, too, on their ships. And they had arranged to swap companies. So a Marine company would go to the Royal Marines, and the Royal Marines would send one of their commando companies to our BLT. So on the deployment I was chosen to be the Royal Marine Company, so I spent one of the deployments with the Royal Marines and worked with the 45 Commando. It was a great experience. And actually, a friend of

mine who was on exchange tour with the Royal Marines was a company commander in that Commando.

Allison: Who was that?

Zinni: Sean Leach. So the commander, what our equivalent of the battalion commander, the commando commander, he had one Brit and two American commanders. One entire American rifle company. But it was a great experience, and the Caribbean was great for training. The liberty was great. The troops liked it. And Camp Lejeune was tough in those days, the training and all that sort of stuff. We were probably seeing the last elements of the racial problems. They weren't all gone . . .

Allison: I was just going to ask you about that.

Zinni: They were diminishing. Really didn't have any problems in our unit. There were still some out there. I think they had gone through their worst period like while I was on Okinawa and that sort of thing. So they were coming out of that, but you had to pay attention to it. I think we were much wiser about how things went, and how to sort of keep the pulse on that sort of thing, but we fortunately did not have any problems with that. I think though we were still seeing the impact of drugs . . .

Allison: Drugs, I was going to say that was a big issue. How did you deal with that? Did you have barracks and surprise inspections?

Zinni: You had the inspections. This was before we got into the urinalysis and everything else. And I would get surprised, once in a while by who might be using drugs, and you find people in the unit that do that. So it was something again that you had to cope with. It was more of an important issue than any of the others we were still trying to get past. The unit though, the leadership was great, the unit was motivated, the training

started to pick up and the quality of the training started to pick up. It was tough down there. We were still going through the shortages in funds and everything else. When you went to the field you couldn't afford vehicles and gas and everything else, so you were still doing things on the cheap. But I liked the challenges. I mean, imaginative training, I had a lot of experience with training, the Basic School thing and the infantry training regiment [ITR]. I knew Camp Lejeune like the back of my hand because of the ITR days on all the ranges in the field and everything else. So I had great lieutenants and NCOs that wanted to get out there and do this training. So we really immersed ourselves in being in the field and doing the training in the Caribbean. The two deployments there were fantastic. My company was the only company to pass the tactics test.

Allison: Yes, I was going to mention that was a big deal. Not many were passing it in those days, were they?

Zinni: Well, no one had passed it. I didn't think anything of it, we took the test—and the test was grueling. In many ways the test was—it was almost impossible to pass it. We did. When I came back in from the field, our regimental commander called me up to his office, and he says, “You passed the tact test!” And I said, “Okay, yeah, I guess I did.” And he says, “Well, how did you do that? Nobody in division's passed it!” *[laughter]*

Allison: How long had you been there at that time, sir, do you recall?

Zinni: About a year.

Allison: So it was right at the end of your tour.

Zinni: Well, as the company commander.

Allison: So it wasn't something you were just deliberately setting out to do, “I'm going to pass

that tact test.” It just came as a result of your day-to-day training.

Zinni: Yes, you know, we immersed ourselves in the training. We just went at it. The Basic School experience, teaching tactics up there, and the ITR experience, it just really helped you understand how to do training, how to put it together, how to convey the doctrinally right way to do things if you will, the tactics techniques and procedures and everything. And so we put a lot of emphasis on that. So it kind of paid off when we did things like the tact test and everything else. So it was a great tour, and I really enjoyed myself.

Allison: Do you remember who the battalion commander was?

Zinni: Yes, J. K. Coody

Allison: You were there about a year, and then you got roped into something you didn’t necessarily want to do.

Zinni: No, we were getting ready to go out on the second Caribbean deployment and we held a dining in, in the battalion before we left. And I’m at the Officers’ Club, and Ray Snyder, who was the aide to the commanding general in the division comes up to me at the dining in and was giving me this spiel about what the job of an aide is. And I didn’t know Ray from Adam, and he’s telling me all about this stuff. And I said to him, “Why are you telling me all this stuff?” And he says, “Well because I’m going to be leaving and they’re thinking that maybe you might want to be the aide.” And I said, “No way I’m the aide. I’m a company commander. I don’t have anything to do with it. I don’t know what it’s about. Why are you asking me? I don’t even know you!” Later on we became really good friends. And I didn’t think anything of it. So I go on deployment—and we’re down on Vieques training, and we’re on our Caribbean deployment, and a

message comes in from division, and it says that the CG [commanding general] is going to be interviewing for an aide. And it lists the requirements. The aide has to be an AWS graduate, has to have commanded a company in combat in Vietnam, has to have commanded a company in the 2d Marine Division, and when you go through, there were like five criteria for this thing. And then at the end it said all the battalions should nominate, and then at the bottom it says, 1st Battalion 8th Marines, will nominate Captain A. C. Zinni. So the battalion commander calls me in and says, "What's this about? Why is your name on this?" So I said, "I don't know." Then I sort of related the conversation with Ray Snyder before I left, but I said, I thought we put that to bed. So he says, "Well, you want to do this?" And I said, "No, sir. I want to stay here, and I want to keep the company." And he said, "Okay, well what do you want me to do? I have to nominate you." And I said, "Sir, can you go back with a message saying I respectfully decline." So he does, he goes back with a message and says Captain Zinni does not desire to be the aide. So I don't think anything of it. So we finished the deployment. We come back. We landed Morehead City. We're off-loading the company. And there's a sedan there at the dock at Morehead City. And this sergeant comes up and says, "Are you Captain Zinni?" And I said, "Yes." And he says, "Sir, you have to come with me right now. The CG wants to see you down at Camp Lejeune in his office." And I said, "Well, I can't go. I'm off-loading my company." And he says, "Sir, the CG wants to see you right now." *[laughter]* I tell my battalion commander. I jump in the car. I'm still in my utilities. I come down and go into General [Fred E.] Haynes [Jr.], who was the CG. And I go into his office and he's sitting there, and he says, "You know, I'm interviewing aides. I've interviewed all the

other nominees. You're the last one." So I said, "Well sir, there must be some mistake," I said, "Did you get the message?" And he says, "Yes, I got the message." And he said, "So you don't want to be my aide?" And I thought, "Uh-oh." Better answer this one right—"I'm a company commander." So he says, "Well, let me get this straight." He says, "It's not anything personal against being the aide, but you're happy as a company commander. You really enjoy it down there and that's where you want to stay. Is that the message?" And I said, "Yes sir, that's exactly the message." He said, "Okay. I just have to make sure I talked to everybody that was a potential aide, but I appreciate your position." So I left. By now, the battalion's down in the battalion area and I go down to the CP and the battalion commander says, "So, what happened?" And I said, "Well, I think it's over. I think the formality of an interview was all that was about . . . "

Allison: You thought you killed it, drove a stake in it.

Zinni: So the next day the battalion commander calls me up, and he says, "I just got a call from General Haynes. He's told me that you're the aide. And he wants you up there tomorrow." And I said, "Well there's some mistake here. I just can't believe this." He says, "Here's your orders, and he wants you up there tomorrow." And I said, "Well sir, I've got to go through my supply count get through all this stuff. There's no way I could check out or anything else." He says, "General Haynes asked me if that was a problem, being up there tomorrow. And I said no." I can't believe it. I go up the next day, just two days back from the cruise, and I go up there and of course Ray Snyder's packing up. I walk in, and then General Haynes calls me in, and he says, "There was one criteria that I didn't put in the message. I wanted somebody that didn't want the

job.” *[laughter]* “You’re the only one that didn’t want the job.” And I thought, “Oh, God.” And I had known the other nominees who were all great officers that were nominated by the other battalions. And I thought this was terrible. I’ve been a company commander, platoon commander, this is—I don’t know how to do this.

Allison: Different realm all together.

Zinni: Yes. So I get into the aide job. General Haynes said to me, “Look,” he said. In those days there were two aides. You had a lieutenant who was a junior aide, and you had the senior aide—the CG has his own mess, the CG has his own boat, the CG has all these enlisted aides at the house. I mean you had a platoon of what in those days were called stewards before they became enlisted aides. And so this was a big deal. The CG had a big entourage. And the senior aide was a captain and junior aide was a lieutenant. So General Haynes called me in and he says, “Look, here’s my concept that I’ve been thinking about. I want the senior aide, the reason I have AWS graduate, company command, combat and everything else.” He says, “I want the senior aide to be what I call the operational aide. Your job is all the business end. So you let the lieutenant take care of the social stuff and all that business. Your job is the operational end.” He said, “I need somebody that gives me a pulse of the company grade officers and the troops, who’s been out there, that’s done it, that has friends out there.” He says, “I don’t get that view of the division. You need to tell me that, we go to the field, tell me what to look for, give me your opinions and views. You know, if you’re not comfortable giving it to me right there we can do it privately afterward.” But he said, “I need that company-grade view, that NCO view, and I expect you to do that, and I expect you to give an opinion—when you see something—based on your experience. I need that

point of view.” So I said, “Oh, well this doesn’t sound so bad.” But then what I found out was when you’re the senior aide, you’re the senior aide. I mean, I had two great lieutenants that came in as the junior aides, but still, you’ve got to make sure everything comes together. I learned that there’s no such thing as a small mistake when you’re working for a general.

Allison: Did you make any big mistakes?

Zinni: I made big mistakes. General Haynes was great. I mean, he was such a great person and was extremely intelligent. Smart guy. He spent a lot of time with me, and he would spend a lot of time talking to me and giving me his views of things and just thinking out loud. He truly lived up to what he had said. He wanted my advice. I was careful—I didn’t want to say anything unless I had something to say. I didn’t want to abuse that sort of privilege that he gave me. And he was really a great educator, mentor for me, at that time. And I would say about 70 percent of the job is worrying about social things, making sure schedules work, and you can’t make a small mistake. But the other percentage part was great. We went off and did things, we would go out with the 10th Marines to the regimental artillery exercise at Fort Bragg watching the artillery shoot going down. Just being around the general as a captain, a young captain, and seeing everything from that level, hearing his views, sitting in the briefings and meetings, I mean, this was exposing me to levels of stuff that I had never had before, and really fascinated me and interested me. And he was a great guy to work for. He was very forgiving, and very supportive of me. So I’m his aide and he gets orders to Korea. He’s going to be staying six months—they had a senior two-star general that did the negotiating with the North Koreans and there’s a rotation. He’s going to do that for six

months and then go down to the 3d Marine Division and be the commander of the 3d Marine Division. And he thought this was fantastic. You now have two divisions back to back. It taught me something, too, because when he got these orders, he was going to be the Korean negotiator. He said, go to the base library and get me every book on Korea that's in the library. And of course he was a voracious reader. That was something that I got into that I followed up on. When he was about to get an assignment, he would bring in all the books and read about Okinawa and everything else. And then he asked me, "Would you want to go with me?" At that time, since he was leaving and it looked like I would be leaving the job, I got to know the regimental commander of the 2d Marines pretty well. He used to come up to the office a lot. He was quite a character, everybody loved him, and he sort of adopted me. And one of my best friends had been in his unit as a battalion S-3, and I gotten to know him before he became a colonel. His name was Al Gray.

Allison: What regiment?

Zinni: Second Marines. And one of his battalion commanders, a guy named Ernie Cook, a hot shot, deep selected major who was given a battalion, he told me, "Hey when you finish this aide work, you come on down and we'll give you a company." So I'm thinking I got a company, now that would be my seventh company here. And I'm thinking this is what I'm going to do. So I said to General Haynes (the Korean tour would have been an unaccompanied tour), "Sir, all this time I spent unaccompanied, and I got a chance to get a company here because Colonel Gray and Major Cook said that when I finished this I could go do that." And he said, "Okay, I understand sure. I'd want to get a company, too. You've got that in the bag rather than be an aide all the time." So he

says, “Fine, go off and do that.” So the assistant division commander was Brigadier General [Arthur J.] “Jake” Poillon. And of course, I knew him because of the aide job. So he is going to be temporarily the division commander. He’s going to be the interim division commander supposedly just for a few months, and then there’s going to be a new one coming in. So he calls me down to his office, and he said, “Look, I’m going to fill in for just a short time, just a month or two before the division commander comes down, a new division commander, whoever that’s going to be.” He says, “I don’t want to change anything up. How about you stay here for those few months just be my aide until . . .” And I thought, “Oh, God.” He didn’t basically even give me the option. I said, “What’s a few months? He’ll keep the company open, hoping I’ll get a company.” Well, General Poillon, it wasn’t a few months. It was a long stretch. Months and months and months and months go by. And obviously the opportunity in 2/2 goes away. Now I’m the aide. General Poillon is a much different personality than General Haynes. A much more sort of aggressive and tougher in some ways, very demanding, but in a good way. He really brought me into his thinking. He would always tell me, “Sometimes I get mad, and when I’m mad, I’ve got to take it out on somebody. So I’m going to take it out on you!” *[Laughter]* He wanted the aide to be someone he could trust and draw in very personally, and I learned—again, learned a lot from him, too.

Allison: Was he a combat veteran in World War II? Or Korea?

Zinni: Korean War veteran. He spent a lot of time in Manpower in headquarters, a real sense of the Marine Corps’ inner workings. It was a great experience. So I go through that, and now General [Samuel] Jaskilka is coming down to get the division, after many, many, many months, and General Poillon is going to go over to FSSG [Force Service

Support Group]. So I just figured, well I'm done with the aide stuff. I can get out of here. Then I get a call that General Jaskilka and he sort of wants to keep the aide in place. I told General Poillon, "I can't do three." And he said, "Okay, okay, I'll talk to General Jaskilka. And so General Jaskilka calls down and says, "How about you pick me an aide?" And so there was a really great officer—Jim Reid who has been in 1/8 with me, a company commander, really sharp, and I said, he would fit General Jaskilka really well. Jim was a big runner; Jaskilka was a runner. I mean, they had a lot in common and I thought they would fit. He said, "Okay." General Jaskilka wanted me to bring him up and sort of snap him in, and so I spent a little bit of time with General Jaskilka. But then I told General Poillon, "Just do me a favor. Just get me back to a battalion and a company." And he said, "No." He said after you've been the CG's aide, the idea would be for you to leave the division when I leave the division. He says, "If people have something against me, they're going to take it out on you, having been the aide and everything else." He says, "You don't want to go down to a unit." Plus, he says, "Look, you've had six companies. If I agree to this and get you down to a battalion and you get a company, people are going to say, oh, that's not what you need to do."

So I was kind of, "Oh, damn." So he says—and now, the G-3 of the division is Colonel Al Gray. He says, I'm going to send you over to G-3 to work for Colonel Gray. So I thought, well, G-3, operations and training, General Gray, this is good. So he sends me over there, so when I finished up checking in, I walked in to see Colonel Gray, and he said, "What do you want to do?" "Well, you know, anything in G-3 training." And he said, "No, no, not my question." He says, "What would be your

dream?” He said, “What is it that you think this division needs? What would you—if you could be king for a day, what is it you would do?” And I said, “Well you know, the thing that’s always gotten me is that I think our infantry skills need to be improved. We need to have a center of excellence on all things infantry, a part of the division. It’s not a division school. It’s a place where units come through where we have courses, where we do things to really hone to an advanced degree our infantry skills. I’ve always had this in the back of my mind since I was at ITR.” So he says, “Take a week off, take a break, think about it, come back in a week and tell me how you would do it.” So I took the week, and I started sort of putzing around the division, and there was—from my days as a lieutenant in the division, the division had a counterinsurgency training center out on the edge of Camp Lejeune and in my days as a lieutenant when we had Vietnam village out there, and they had all these Marines that would play the role of the Vietnamese. Actually they would pick Hispanic Marines because they all spoke Spanish because it was a common language, and they would be the villagers and it was a great training. It was great counterinsurgency training. You went out there through this course and everything else. And then it became the Special Warfare Training Center.

Allison: Special Warfare?

Zinni: Well, it wasn’t special ops. In those days, special operations in the Marine Corps’ definition was mountain, desert, jungle, and cold weather training. And really they were focused on some of the mountain training and cold weather training. And this thing had sort of fallen off, too. There were a few people out there as cadre, but it was starting to just about be phased out. So I thought, if you give me that place and some

instructors that I could pick, I could build this sort of infantry training center out there.

Allison: You told Gray that?

Zinni: So then I told Colonel Gray, and he said, “Go out there, come back, tell me what to do.” And I went out there and I looked at the place. It was kind of falling apart. Some of the cadre out there were just sort of there as caretakers, kind of phasing out. There was a great old master gunnery sergeant named Level, Top Level who had been a Raider in World War II. He had been in Korea with the 7th Marines, and he had spent seven and a half years in Vietnam. This guy was a gem. So when I saw him and some of the others, I came back to Colonel Gray and told him this is the scoop. I’m not asking for a lot, just let me do this and I’ll do it. He said, “Do it.” There was some resistance then because nobody wanted these nonstructural things added on to everything else. So he says, “You know, you’re going to get tested. People are going to challenge what you do.” So I developed this infantry training center, and I wanted units to come through, companies for training, and we set up a weapons training program like you put your machine gunners through, your antitank people. So we set up these courses, the rifle company courses. I had an infantry squad leaders course and all this stuff so we put this together, and it really took off. I mean General Jaskilka loved it.

Allison: Did he?

Zinni: Oh, he just embraced it. It was—to him it became a personal thing. He was out there and supported it and wanted us to keep doing it, wanted to make the training harder and harder. I knew that the way you would succeed is when the companies came through, what the company commanders said about the training. Not what anybody from the top down said. So I wanted to be sure that a couple criteria—when the company

commanders come out here, it's their time. I show them what all the curricula options are. They pick it. They go through it. There would not be any tests, no tact test. I didn't want to administer tact tests. There would be no report. I'd have battalion commanders come out, and regimental commanders, and say, "How did Captain so-and-so do compared to so-and-so." And I'd say this is not a test and I don't tell on company commanders, and company commanders come out there, they can make mistakes. They can experiment. They can do what they want. They can tell me what they want. They can tell me tomorrow not to do anything. They could tell me tomorrow they wanted to do twice as much to accommodate them and their training. So the company commanders really liked it. Every machine gunner we put through qualified. Because we would put them through a week and a half course and at the end they would shoot machine gun qualification according to the qualification standards. We set up the qualification for weapons that didn't have standard qualifications, some of the antitank weapons and everything else. And so that was fantastic. I loved it. I was in the field all the time. It was training. It was tactics. It was weapons. I really felt we improved the division's capability. The regimental commanders loved it. Colonel [James W.] Marsh had the 2d Marines, he came out, he loved it, and all the regimental commanders thought it was fantastic. The company commanders liked it because they didn't have to—I would go back to their battalions and tell them when they picked what they wanted to do—out there I already knew the ammunitions requirements, transportations requirements so they didn't have to do all the logistics work. I would just hand it in for them. And it was all fixed. They would come out with their troops, and it was pure training. They didn't have to do any of the support stuff, just go through the course. It

was their course. They could change it, modify it, do more, do less. We were near CC—correctional custody was up the road, and one of my best friends in the Marine Corps, John Gutter, ran that, so I had working parties up there, and the correctional custody Marines liked coming down and working there and it was good for them, too, because it helped to straighten them out. So we had plenty of people. I took all my NCOs and put them through training so they would be good NCOs. When I had the quotas for instructors, I told the G-1 and others I did not want to go out and make this the best and the brightest, and so you start robbing units and get a bad reputation. I said I will take whoever's available that's reasonable. I went to the regimental commanders, and I said, "Look. Give me guys that need a break." Or, "Give me guys that—they need to be with their families. They've been away from their families and staff NCOs. NCOs that need a little more family time. Maybe you had a few family problems you had to sort out, because I'm going to get them home every night, and I need them out here to teach course that I will train them to do." But they liked that. There were people that they felt you can find them in all these units, that Staff Sergeant Jones there needs a break. He needs to spend time with his family. Maybe he needs to patch up a marriage and needs a little time. I can do that. He can meet my needs, too. So they liked that. You had guys coming back from double pumps and cruises and they had time to do, and I didn't mind picking those guys up. They were appreciative and put their heart and soul into it, and I could train them to be a trainer and an instructor, too.

Allison: Would they act as aggressors? Or were they more just out there to facilitate training as instructors?

Zinni: No, they were all instructors. All my guys were instructors. If we needed to use

aggressors or something, we'd do it from correctional custody. And then like one of my instructors would take out the aggressors and all. But no, we didn't do the aggressor stuff. I had people that did the weapons side, so they were expert machine gunners, antitanks, you know, recoilless rifles in those days, and all that side of it. And then I had my tactics instructors. And I also beefed up the special operations. And again, these were really environmental ones. I had instructors that I sent off to Fort Greely, Alaska, the cold weather experts. They would go out with the units that were doing cold weather training. We had the Norway commitment, and they would go up to Camp Drum for cold weather training. So my cold weather expert guys would teach them the cold weather stuff, how to use the gear, how to operate in cold weather, and they would go with you.

They would help train some of the trainers in the units. Then I had guys who I sent off to Panama, the jungle warfare school. I'd been through that, too. They would go with units in the Caribbean down to jungle war training school. I had guys that went off to mountain training, so we would send—their companies would go out to Pickel Meadows, and they'd learn all about the ropes and the mountain stuff. We were beginning to go to Twentynine Palms. And so I had people that went through desert training, desert survival, and that sort of thing. The other thing we did was we taught survival. I had a couple people who had been through survival training. But know what to eat and what to kill and all that stuff. So I had really three elements. I had the tactics, I had the weapons, and I had the special—what was called special operations.

Allison: And they were all instructors, and they would go with units to these different places for this specialized training.

Zinni: Yep, yep. We would do the training there at Camp Lejuene, and we had ranges dedicated out there, some of the old ITR ranges. By then, ITR, they had gone on to field skills training unit within the division. Then they were experimenting with different ways to do the basic infantry training. But we had the old ranges that I knew like the back of my hand in our days. So we use those for the weapons. Live fire stuff, all live fire. And most of it, even the training for the tactics training was a mix of live fire and other things, scouting the patrolling and all.

Allison: And how much influence did your experience with the Army have on this program?

Zinni: Not much until later. I mean the BCTP [battle command training program] did come out until much later.

Allison: So it was very successful.

Zinni: Yes, and I loved it, and I was really happy down there and spent a little over three years there. And then I got orders to Headquarters Marine Corps. And I thought, I had died. I'm not going to Headquarters *[laughter]*.

Allison: Did it have an influence, what you did there? Did it have an influence on the MAGTF [Marine air-ground task force] staff training program that came later? The CAX [combined exercise] or MCCRES [Marine Corps combat readiness evaluation system]? Was there any sort of connection or commonality there?

Zinni: I think by the time I left there, I was—obviously that was the end of my captain's time. I was in the zone for major when I left, and I was eventually selected right after I got to Headquarters Marine Corps. But I think, in my company grade time, you know, lieutenant and captain, and of course, we made captain early and stayed captain a long time, as a result of the Vietnam generation. I really felt that if I had to say one thing

about it that it probably set a foundation for maybe who I was. Because all the time—all the FMF time and all the time in training, I mean I really came out of that feeling my experience with weapons systems at that level, tactics, especially, that I had been blessed with a tremendous amount of experience, and I really immersed myself in trying to understand it. I mean, I read every manual, I had the opportunity because of the company command time and the infantry training center and the infantry training regiment to experiment, to try things, to really observe things. And you know, the time at Basic School, teaching counterinsurgency, scouting and patrolling, and tactics. You know, at this stage of the game, now it's 1974 so for nine years, I have to say that when you look at the involvement in tactics and weapons systems and leadership responsibility and actual combat experience . . . I just felt like, boy, I could not have asked for a better company grade time. I loved it, but the experiences, the opportunities, the chances to test ideas I had, to match the tactics and training, at that time, with the exception of two years of Basic School and that was all teaching tactics and counterinsurgency and scouting and patrol. It just could not have been a better situation as far as I was concerned.

Allison: Not to mention your time with advisors in Vietnam.

Zinni: Basically it was the same.

Allison: Of course, Al Gray is a very historical figure. If you characterize him from this time period, what do you think of him? What do you think of?

Zinni: I had a good friend down there, Jack Sheehan.

Allison: Right, I was going to ask about him, too.

Zinni: Sheehan and I were—I got to know him at Quantico when I was going through—when

I was up at Quantico, he was going through AWS. He was a neighbor of mine. He went to the AWS class before me. We got to know each other since we lived across the street. We got to be good friends. So I run into him again, down in 2d Marine Division. He's a company commander in 1/2. And he eventually became the three there. But we were good friends. And one day while I was in 1/8, in Delta Company, Jack said to me—he always used to talk about his battalion commander, what a great guy he was, this is Al Gray. And then he says, "You've got to meet him, you've got to meet him. You'd really like him." So he said, "How about, let's go to dinner one night at the Officer's Club?" So we go to the Officer's Club one night, and it's Jack, myself, and Lieutenant Colonel Gray.

So I had dinner with him. And I'm listening to him, you know, Lieutenant Colonel Gray. First of all, what really impresses me is how warm and personable he is. He just wants to know all about you—and just kind of personality he has. I mean, in those days the captain to a lieutenant colonel chasm was actually there. And here's this guy—his experiences and all—what really impressed me is I'm listening to a lieutenant colonel that has the same enthusiasm for tactics and leadership and things that usually I was hearing from captains and lieutenants. And then I began to realize as I'm talking to him, he knows his stuff. There's a lot to be learned from this guy. He not only knows it, he has the enthusiasm of a lieutenant or captain, and he has this wonderful personality. I mean, this kind of sense of humor, this kind of sense of—just somebody you want to be around. This magnetic personality, this real exceptional knowledge and the way he can understand things and analyze things and understanding and tactics and weapons and everything else. And he sort of latches on to me. And I'm over in 1/8, and

he's in 1/2, a different unit, and so from then on, oftentimes I'd get a call from him, or he'd say, "Why don't you and Sheehan come on over here." And you'd talk tactics, you'd talk leadership, you'd talk Marine Corps stuff. I mean, this is stuff that my buddy captains and I would talk about. Now you find a lieutenant colonel that's not only interested in it but really knows his stuff. To be honest with you, and I saw this from the age perspective, there were a lot of battalion and regimental commanders that came in that I was shocked that they didn't know what they would do in operations. They had been away from the FMF for a while. As a matter of fact, I said something one day to General Poillon. We were in a field watching a unit and their tactics were horrible and the battalion commander didn't know what he was doing. And it's not my place as a captain to say anything about that, but I said something like, "That's terrible." And General Poillon said to me one time, he says, "Do you know of anybody that's been fired from command for discrepancies in supply and personnel issues and maybe leadership failure?" And I said, sure. And then he said to me, "Do you ever see anybody that's fired or knows anyone that's fired because they were tactically incompetent?" And I said, "No." He said, "That's the problem." And that stuck with me.

So to find somebody like General Gray that had tactics and operations down and everything else, this is what the Marine Corps is all about, how you fight. And this guy knew it and his level of enthusiasm—but then the fact that he sort of reached out to people he connected with, and it didn't matter what unit you were with or anything else. You were sort of one of his guys. If he found that you had the same interests, if you responded to that, if you were interested in that, he would sort of embrace you. So

I found myself getting to know him. Then when I was the aide and he became the regimental commander, 2d Marines, and he'd come up to the office all the time, and he'd come into the aide's office, and sit there and talk to us all the time. Now he was a colonel and I was a captain, but he's talking to us at the same level, and when he was at G-3 and I had the infantry training center, he wanted to come out and know what I was doing, give me advice. So I really connected to him in that way. He was also like a godfather. There were times when he would straighten me out, too. He'd come up and say, "You've got to stop doing this stuff, or you need to do that stuff." He always had this sort of—if you needed a Dutch uncle, or a kick in the pants, he'd do that, too. And so you sort of build this bond. And he had a big following. There were a lot of others that sort of really related to him, and of course, I was one of them. I just considered myself a Gray guy.

Allison: Well was he talking about tactics, leadership? There was the maneuver school type of tactics, too, he was known for. Were you starting to get some of that, different stuff than the traditional Marine Corps tactics?

Zinni: Yes, he was. I mean, it's just like when he said to me, "What do you want to do? Go think about this." He always wanted to see if you had new ideas and thoughts if your thoughts were along the same lines, if you could develop something. He would give you an idea. He wanted to see if you could flesh it out, if you could run with it and make it happen, too. So he was always thinking ahead and thinking outside the box and not conventionally. And frankly, I've found very few people, senior levels that had that kind of interest in operations and tactics, which disappointed me. To me, that's what the Marine Corps is all about. That's what the business of the business was. And I

didn't hear that from a lot of people, or I ran into colonels and lieutenant colonels that had been away from it, didn't express any interest in it, or faked it, which really bothered me. And then to see somebody like General Gray come along.

Allison: Really refreshing.

Zinni: Yes! I mean, I've been around the Quantico guys like that, too, guys like [Patrick G.] "Paddy" Collins and others that really knew their stuff. I mean, operations and tactics. So I felt really blessed that I've been around General Trainor, who knew his stuff. I mean, I have a battalion commander in Vietnam that knows this stuff. So you know, the Trainors, the Grays, Paddy Collins, my first company commander in 1/6. I was around people that either were immersed in the kinds of things that I felt were important—operations, tactics and leadership—and/or, said you've got to figure it out. Gave you the trust and the strength to experiment, do what you need to continue to do, interest in what you had to say, would provide that mentorship and allow that interaction. So what formed me in that company grade time were these people that I ended up around. General Haynes, General Poillon, and people like that, so I was really blessed by that, to be around people like that. They sort of tipped the end one way or another and gave you that trust but also shared that kind of experience and knowledge.

Allison: And you go through that, and you must have been really pumped up, excited maybe about maybe things are going to change, are going to get better after Vietnam.

Zinni: Then I go to Headquarters and get assigned to MMOA. This is Manpower and its officer assignments in Manpower.

Allison: MMOA-3.

Zinni: MMOA-3, which they had restructured, reorganized up there, and when they

reorganized, they had this MMOA-3, which was kind of like the policy piece of officer assignment branch. They did the policy. Within the policy, you had people that actually did the policy, people that did other specific things. This was sort of the odds and ends and policy section. And so I ran the augmentation boards. I did the assignment of MOSs to lieutenants. In those days, education, nonmilitary education could only be entered in one unit diary. I had that unit diary. I had all these sorts of odds and ends. When I got up there, I mean, I couldn't believe it.

Allison: And it was in the Navy Annex.

Zinni: It was in the Navy Annex. So my boss, Lieutenant Colonel Gordon Busby. He looked at me and he says, "This is your staff time, you know." He looks at my record and he sees the infantry background and all this other stuff and he says, "You're going to pay your dues now." And he says, "This is important, too. You've just got to get into it."

So you know, I did—I liked the augmentation piece. I liked the augmentation boards because you're picking quality officers. You're doing some good for the Marine Corps. The other nice thing about the job was I assigned MOSs to lieutenants in Basic School, giving talks there. And when I came down to Basic School, they used to let me come down, spend a couple days. I'd make an excuse to go down and work the MOSs, but I would take out patrols. I would teach classes. So I was actually keeping my hand in a little bit. And the Basic School people were glad to have me down there. So that part of it was great. But the Headquarters Marine Corps routine and the grind for three years was painful. But I eventually moved up to the deputy's spot, the number two spot and doing some of the policy stuff. But the amazing thing about MMOA, because MMOA could assign in whoever they wanted, everybody was a superstar. I'm just a

captain assigned in there, but other people in there were Jim Jones, Pete Pace, Butch Neil, Joe Hoar. I could go on and on, but future generals that were all in there. All were in our section of MMOA.

Allison: At that time?

Zinni: At that time. I mean there must have been 20 captains and majors that went on to be senior general officers at that time.

Allison: I remember Jack Sheehan was there, too, wasn't he?

Zinni: Jack Sheehan was there. Les Palm. I mean it went on and on. I mean I could name you all these generals that had all been in MMOA at that time. We were all in it at the same time.

Well the thing that got me is we had all these type-As and highly competitive people in there, in a good way. The interesting thing is we all bonded. I think you could find a lot of places where you find a lot of people where you have the luxury of picking the people that you want, but what I found is I made some great friends. And friends that were going to be in the Marine Corps for a long time, you were going to get to know and work with. The other thing, too, at Headquarters, since it was fairly stable life, you got to work out, be in good shape, and we played sports. We had a flag football league, softball, whatever, so—we're in good shape and great friends. Some pieces of it I really enjoyed, the augmentation boards, coming down to the Basic School. I'd learned something there, that when I got there I had a master sergeant and a staff sergeant working for me, and 11 women civilians. Now, this is my first time—I mean, up to this point, my leadership experience is all men, all Marines. And now all of a sudden, I've got 11 female civilian employees. And I thought, holy cow, how is this

one . . .

Allison: This is going to be different.

Zinni: And so the first time one of the women has a—what I would say is a leadership issue or something and asked to see me and it was some sort of personal problem and needed somebody to talk to, I was kind of, “Oh my God, what do I do with this?” But my master sergeant had been at Headquarters Marine Corps forever. He was like Mr. Admin. He’d been there forever. He knew Headquarters Marine Corps; he’d spent 20 years at Headquarters Marine Corps. And he kind of laughed. He came to me at first and says (I kind of focused on leadership on my master sergeant, staff sergeant, but they were fine), he says, “You know, let me tell you something Major. You see these 11 women out here?” He says, “They require your leadership involvement just as much as staff sergeant and I do.” He says, “One thing you’ve got to learn now is leading civilians.” And at that time, of course, there was not the number of women in the military, in the Marine Corps like there is now. But he says, “This is a new experience, it’s women, and it’s civilians.” He said, “It’s different,” but he said, “You have a leadership obligation and it may require some different ways to do business. But you owe them that obligation, too.” And he says you just have to learn that. And I thought, boy, he’s right. I’ve got to figure it out—this is a different kind of leadership experience, and you’ve got to figure out how to do that. And I wanted to learn. So he said, “You know, they’re going to have personal problems. They’re going to have concerns. They’re going to have issues just like Marines do. They’re different, maybe in nature, but at the same time, because you’re the boss, they’re going to come to you, and there are times you’re going to have to counsel them. There are times you’re going

to have to chew them out, and you just need to get through that experience.” It’s not like being in an infantry company and you may not do it the same way, but those same things have to happen. So that was a different sort of wrinkle on leadership.

Fortunately, my master sergeant really gave me a lot of good advice and it sort of opened up another sort of dimension to leadership, too, for me.

Allison: A learning experience.

Zinni: Yes. And I thought—and I felt that this is a unit just like any other unit. And morale and leadership support may be different in composition and the requirements may be different, but you’ve got to create this sort of unit cohesion, this sense of unit pride and everything else, and make sure that they feel part of the organization too. And it was a little tougher because it required a different style, but it helped me expand my understanding of leadership to another level or dimension that you wouldn’t normally have, or I hadn’t had until that point.

Allison: I picked up somewhere that you had to straighten out a senior staff NCO on something, physical training.

Zinni: That was the master sergeant.

Allison: Was he out of shape? Or what’s the deal on that?

Zinni: Like I said, he had been at Headquarters Marine Corps forever. And he was invaluable. This guy knew everything. And like in MMOA he was a legend. He, however, was overweight.

Allison: He looked like he had been there forever.

Zinni: Yes, you know. So nobody really called him on this. And I had just gotten there. General [Louis H.] Wilson Jr. had just become Commandant of the Marine Corps.

General Wilson runs into him in the hallway *[laughter]*. Holy cow . . . by the barber shop, not a good experience, you know? But before this happened, I sat down with him and I said, “Top, I have tremendous respect for you and your experience and all this stuff, but you don’t meet Marine Corps requirements in personal appearance and obviously physical fitness.” And he was really upfront. He said, “I know, I’ve been at Headquarters a lot.” He had an off-duty job he worked up there. It was in Washington; it was tough. And he just had let himself go. So I said, “Look, let’s do this. If you’re willing to work out with me, I work out every day at noon time.” And I had joined the Pentagon Officer Athletic Club, the POAC, the only place there to work out, run, lift weights, and all. I said, “Why don’t you come down with me, and I’ll work with you. Just get down there every day and do something.” And he says, “Okay, I’ll do it.” So we had just started this. So when he runs into General Wilson and there’s hell to pay, Wilson wants to know why this guy’s overweight, what’s happening. Of course, it comes down through, the three-star, who is [General Robert E.] Barrow at the time . . .

Allison: Manpower?

Zinni: Yes, Manpower, then it goes to MM, and it was General [Lloyd H.] Wilkerson, Senior Wilkerson. Then it goes to MMOA, to colonel, down to the lieutenant colonel, and they’re all going, “Oh my God, Wilson wants to know what’s being done, if he’s on a program and all that.” Of course, they don’t believe he’s on any program because they’ve basically been giving him a pass. Little do they know, I have him on a program. Not only is he working out with me, but we’re tracking it, and we’re doing everything by Marine Corps regulations. So they’re all panic-stricken. General Wilson wants to know. So I said, “It’s not a problem. Top is on a program. He began it with

me, and we had just started, but he's on the program." So they were like, "Thank God!" So of course, Wilson wants to follow this guy personally to make sure how he's doing. Unbelievable. I mean, literally, he commits to this thing and his weight begins to drop. He's like a new man. His uniform's—he's trying new uniforms almost every week. So Wilson says really, you know, this is great. This is exactly what you're supposed to do. My bosses think this is great. But more importantly, Top says, "I'm like a new man. I can't believe it. I just feel so good. I have so much energy. I feel so positive. My family is noticing the difference," and he really had come around. And I've got to say, basically it got to the point where we would take the bus down to the POAC together and he'd do his thing.

Allison: Did General Wilson ever know that you were responsible?

Zinni: To me that wasn't important. I wasn't—I mean, it was about Top. My experiences up there—what I loved about the Marine Corps is—when there are people like General Wilson and General Barrow and those people there, it's how much trust they put in you. There was this time when we got into this problem—we had too many aviators, the pipeline was backed up, something happened at Pensacola—we had these aviation contracts, and we were going to have to make a decision. There were no good options in this thing. You're going to break the contracts, going to force them to go to other MOSs, allow them to do interservice transfers. No good options in this. And when I got called up, and I'm in General Wilson's office, and here's General Wilson, General Barrow, General Wilkerson, all these people, and General Wilson turns to me and says, "What should I do, major?" I said, "Sir, this is a really a difficult decision. None of these options are very good. I mean it's like choosing the least worst option. Far be it

from me to tell the commandant of the Marine Corps what to do.” He looked at me and said, “Listen, major. See everybody in this room?” And they’re all generals. And he says, “You know more about this subject than anybody in this room. We’re going to do what you think we should do!” *[Laughter]* And I thought, “Wow.” He said, “I mean, you’re the guy. You’re the man. That’s why we put you here.”

Allison: So what did they decide to do?

Zinni: I think at the time we decided to give the option that they could do interservice transfers. Because the other services were vying for aviators, and we were discussing it with the Navy and others. Give them the option on their MOSs or allow them to break their contract, this series of things that we put together. But what impressed me was the fact that they were open to letting junior guys who were the specialists, they wanted to hear from them. The other thing I liked about my chain of command there is no one ever says, “You brief me. Then, I’ll brief the next boss.” Everybody always said, you can take the action officer in to see the Commandant, or the seniors or the three star. The action officer briefs. Nobody tried to steal your thunder or take your message, and everybody gave you credit. It was just a good environment. The right people, the right generals, the right colonels up there, the leadership was great. I mean, from that point of view, again another great leadership experience for me and how much trust the action officer—the other thing that happened there at that time, is when General Wilson came in as Commandant. General Wilson put this letter out, and he said, “Everyday I’m getting briefs on things, and I go into the ‘master bedroom’”—or the theatre or the briefing room at the Headquarters Marine Corps—and he says, “I’m getting a brief that’s tremendously valuable, like a brief on unmanned aerial vehicles.”

Those were new concepts then. He says, “I’m getting a brief on this and that.” He says, “I looked around and there were only five people there. When I get briefs as the commandant, I want to fill up the theater.” It may be just—they don’t need to talk, but he says, “We’ve got a bunch of young action officers here at Headquarters Marine Corps. This will improve their knowledge and understanding of the Corps.” And he says, “I want to put out a sign-up sheet for people; they can volunteer to come to these.” And I volunteered for every one of them. You’d just sit in the back, but now I’m beginning to hear the kinds of things that commandants get briefed on, and I thought that was fantastic. General Wilson opened all those briefs up. While I was up there, there was a lot of pressure at the time on the Marine Corps. There was Bill Lind and others now beginning this maneuver warfare business.

Allison: Is that when that had kicked in?

Zinni: That’s when it had kicked in. And I lived down here, near Quantico right off the base here. There were a lot of these after-hours meetings and groups, looking into this. There was a lot of controversy about that. General [P. X.] Kelley didn’t like it so much and these groups wrote articles in the *Gazette*. They were beginning to speak out. But these were the first formative stages of this sort of thing and I got involved in that and in some of that, and there is a big push in Washington to change the Marine Corps. The famous Binkin and Record little monograph comes out, *Where Does the Marine Corps Go From Here*. Then [James R.] Schlesinger at our 200th anniversary birthday ball said that they question the Marine Corps’ existence again. The Commandant is under pressure now to change the Marine Corps and “mech” it up. And the thing is that you must be relevant to Europe and the Soviet and the Cold War threat. The Marine Corps

is too light. And now there's a big push for the Marine Corps to become mechanized. And of course, General Wilson is—some of the old generals say you've got to be careful. You go down one road. If that's the wrong road, you've got to stay balanced, stay ready, don't get yourself committed to one path and get yourself so heavy you're irrelevant. Lot of pressure to do this. So there's a study group that forms up at Headquarters Marine Corps and I forget the name of the group. The group is getting ready to release its study, and the study the group put together recommends meching up the Marine Corps. Nobody could believe this because it was a high-price study group, some new and upcoming guys. But it was sort of antithetical to the sort of philosophy that the senior generals had.

Allison: But it was Marines on the study group.

Zinni: Marines. But the report gets leaked, and Lind and others grab on to this and this causes a fury. Meantime, when this study group comes out there's also a criticism that it only dealt with the active forces. You need to restructure the reserves. So a newly promoted Brigadier General Al Gray gets tasked with coming up to Headquarters Marine Corps and doing a study on the restructuring of the Marine Corps Reserve. And so Gray says, "I want Zinni on the study group." So I go over, and I spent several months with him.

Allison: You're at this time part of MMOA still?

Zinni: Yes, and so I get sort of a leave of absence from MMOA, and I go off to this study group on restructuring the Marine Corps Reserves. We had to be involved with also the active duty structure. So all these issues—that was at sort of the beginnings of the maneuver warfare movement and they need to change traditional approaches to warfare, the old school. I'm in the beginnings of that, with some of the stuff going on

down here at Quantico. There's controversy about restructuring—I'm on these restructure study groups and reorganizational study group and General Gray's personal assistant, executive assistant for that study. So it sort of got me involved in a lot of these restructuring issues and everything else that went on. So that was interesting, working with General Gray, and looking at these structural issues, this mech up issue. General Wilson getting a lot of pressure to mech up the Marine Corps but resisting it. He is resisting it. The secretary of defense [Schlesinger] is putting a lot of pressure on, do we need a Marine Corps, where do you go from here.

Allison: He was even saying—there was even this idea that we maybe don't need a Marine Corps?

Zinni: Yes. There was a question. We had questions about our aviation then also.

Allison: What were they saying about aviation?

Zinni: Well you know, can we have four air forces, you know, all this business. So these issues are beginning to stir up, up there. So being involved with General Gray on the study regarding the Reserves, I was involved in all of this as it came out.

Allison: Do you know about anybody else that was? The opposing sides, the line up there, any names that you could—that were associated with that?

Zinni: You had like [Kenneth] Estes and others that were much into the mech side and the tankers obviously.

Allison: Marty Steel?

Zinni: No, I didn't know Marty then. But I knew him later. There seemed to be two sides to this. There seemed to be the side that said the Marine Corps needs to stay ready, needs to stay balanced in structure, should not go down one path. The experience was going

back to President Kennedy wanting the Marine Corps to be special forces and a counterinsurgency force. And at the time, General [David M.] Shoup resisted it. The famous quote was Kennedy said, “How many counterinsurgency forces, special kinds of forces can you put on the ground?” And Shoup said 189,000. That was the size of the Marine Corps at the time. It wasn’t the answer that Kennedy wanted, but what Shoup was saying was, “I’ll do whatever you want me to do, but I want to stay balanced and flexible.” We have a role, whether it’s conventional warfare at the top end or the bottom end, we’ll adjust, but we’re not going to commit the Marine Corps to go one way. People like General Krulak, the senior, was saying, you stay ready, you stay balanced, that’s what you do. Be careful going down a path that you think today it seems glamorous, because you could suddenly structure yourself out of business and it will be irrelevant. Had we done that for the insurgency buildup in Vietnam and all, we’d have been irrelevant afterwards. And then the other issue was, stay light. Remember, we go by sea. And you can’t be so heavy that they can’t move you. Then you’re irrelevant. And then the third argument was—we have an Army. We don’t need to basically look like the Army. We have an Army. They understand the line of work and that concept. We have tanks and mech capability that’s good for what we do, but we’re not that kind of force. And of course the other side was not enough mobility, not enough firepower. We were looking now at the northern flank of Europe, the southern flank of Europe and how we would be effective there and how would a mechanized—they were calling it a Marine combined arms task forces, that would be mechanized and built up. And Wilson’s trying to stave this off, and hold it off. I was going to get involved in this later, too, when we came to it, in a more direct way.

Allison: When you were working for the Navy, the secretary of the Navy?

Zinni: Oh no, when I was down in the 2d Marines. But this was the stuff that was fomenting, the maneuver warfare business, mechanization of the Marine Corps, the old Marine Corps in terms of war against the Soviets and the Cold War.

Allison: They're still putting a heavy emphasis on aviation, as being the Marine air-ground team.

Zinni: Yes, preserving the MAGTF, the value of the MAGTF, trying to communicate that. A lot of people were coveting our assets, peeling off one part of the aviation and that sort of thing. Even other services working against us on that. So I got to get involved in that a little bit, too, in some ways. And then I finished that tour, and go to Command and Staff College.

Those tours, when you look at them and you know you're going to go to them, you just say, "Oh no, maybe another year." If you're like every other Marine, you want to spend your whole time in your MOS in the Fleet Marine Force and everything else. And then when you get there, if you have the right kind of people that say, there's something you can learn here, you ought to pay attention, there's something you get out of this. That gets you focused. And then I think afterwards when you go back and examine what you did, those are valuable lessons. That broad base of experience is value added. You ended up realizing you did get something out of it, even though it may not have been what really warmed your heart the most.

Allison: While we're on it, did you see this as a transitional time in the sense that the old guard, the World War II, Korean War generation is leaving and you've got the new up and coming—the new leaders of the Marine Corps yourself . . .

Zinni: I think that those of us who were company grade officers maybe even field grade in Vietnam, felt that we didn't understand that war. That our senior leaders, who we greatly respected, these were legendary World War II, Medals of Honor, these are the Shoups and the Wilson's and the Barrow's and the—these are all the people that are legendary—but they got themselves in a war that was very different than the one they had been in before. Very different than Korea, very different than World War II, and in many ways, there was a lot of disappointment in some of the decisions about how we were fighting this war. But I think coming out of Vietnam, we were in a new era. There was a different kind of warfare out there, and the old leadership. This was different than where they had their positive experiences. We had the Vietnam experience so we were very different. And I think, added to that, in the '70s and the '80s, it's sort of rethinking the mind-set, the maneuverists beginning to push and pressure, rethinking the attritionist approach. Restructuring of the military, Army and Marine Corps post-Vietnam. All these things sort of come together, sort of the confluence of these things to say that those of us that grew up in the Vietnam era then grew up through the renaissance period in operational thinking, the restructuring of the all-volunteer military force—we were coming out of that with a much different view.

Allison: Right. Times have changed, thank you. We'll call it a day.

Zinni: Okay.

End of Session IV

UNITED STATES MARINE CORPS HISTORY DIVISION
Oral History Interview

Interviewee: General Anthony C. Zinni
Date: April 2007
Length: 2:03:35
Interviewer: Dr. Fred H. Allison

SESSION V

Allison: Sir, good morning. Last time we had talked about your experiences at Headquarters—during this period and in 1975 the Vietnam War ended. How did that event affect you?

Zinni: It was pretty emotional because we were following events, especially with the Vietnamese Marines, those of us that were advisors. And when the offensive came and things began to crumble, we were very much tuned into the intelligence up there and following things. Some of the Vietnamese Marines had gone off into the hills and were transmitting. Obviously we were tuned into the Intelligence Division at Headquarters Marine Corps and had been able to track that, and it was, when Saigon finally fell, it was really emotional. As a matter of that, I asked my boss if I could go home. I mean, it was really on my mind. It was taking all my friends, Vietnamese friends particularly. It just seemed that my whole time, since I was commissioned, Vietnam really kicked up, and we went in—I was at Basic School. That was in '65, and now here we are at '75, and so 10 years had passed. It caused me to be very reflective about my whole time. Since I've been commissioned in the Marine Corps, it was all about Vietnam. And now it was over, and you really began to worry about, well, that seemed to be the purpose and the drive of everything, you know. What is there now? I had to rethink all that. I mean there wasn't a war there. I didn't originally think I would stay in the

Marine Corps, and then Vietnam made me not even think about it as long as that war was on. You were committed, and now here you were, 10 years in, a major, and that had collapsed, and you had to determine what's going to drive you in the future, worried about your friends, there. And of course it was a defeat, in many respects, for the United States, the first real defeat. So there were all sorts of implications about Vietnam, and what it meant. The environment, of course, we were in the midst of reconstructing the military, and the all-volunteer force, so there were still a lot of challenges in there. But I think basically you saw that we were going to come out of Vietnam. We were going to reshape the Marine Corps. There's going to be a new orientation. We're now looking at our roles elsewhere in the world. At the same time it was an exciting time, the Marine Corps was reorienting itself and redesigning itself in many ways.

Allison: You worked for Colonel Busby while you were at Headquarters, wasn't he the Commandant's nephew?

Zinni: Yes, he was. Gordon Busby, and he was my boss, great boss, a really smart guy, and he really knew Headquarters and knew particularly Manpower and assignments. Not that Manpower was particularly interesting for an infantry officer and all that, but I think he talked to me a lot about—not only how higher headquarters staffs run, but also about the Manpower system in the Marine Corps. There were the satisfying things like the augmentation board, the assignment of MOSs to the Basic Course, things that I had responsibility for. Officer assignment, planning, and other things that were very complex; it was not easy to come to grips with that and understand it. But it taught me a lot about the system. It's very important in any organization as to how, on this

particular side of it, the officer corps, but how it's managed and how it's organized, and how it's assessed and distributed. And so it added to your basic knowledge of how large organizations work, especially the Marine Corps.

Allison: You were talking about officer retention—did you look at it as straight down the line as far as fitness reports go, or did you evaluate individuals based on other factors?

Zinni: No, on all the augmentation boards and other things that we did, the selection processes, and I've sat on a lot of boards, I mean, one of the things about going to MMOA and then afterwards is, for some reason I ended up on a lot of selection boards for the rest of my career from there on. Not only augmentation boards, but school selection boards, command selection boards, promotion boards, Reserve promotion boards, active duty promotion boards. I think I sat on 16 boards in my time in the Marine Corps. And it's interesting to watch the process, and you learn how to dig into cases and draw out of them more than just a statistical analysis of a set of fitness reports. In other words, how many times were you ranked in this block, and what are your averages, but you actually learn to dissect and analyze a case. You had to get into what's written. You have to look for trends. You have to get into understanding this particular officer. I've been on enlistment promotion boards, too, on enlisted cases, and understanding something more than just the blocks have been checked off, and that sort of thing, and I felt I got very good at that, because in the time I was at Officer Retention and Release, I probably saw every officer's record book in the Marine Corps, including the general officers, and the Commandant. As a matter of fact, I had access to those; I actually had those. Not only that, but in those days, there were certain diary entries that only my section could enter. Like education and other things, it wasn't as it

is now. And I controlled those, things, and so if there was adverse material in an officer's record, only I could enter the block that indicated adverse material. So I had access to every adverse thing that came through on every officer. So it was very unique in that respect, and it gave me the understanding of what was important, how you read officers' records. And a lot of people out there, especially when we were on boards or otherwise, would come to me—even the monitors would say, "How about taking a look at this case, telling me what you think?" I sort of became the expert just based on the experience and the numbers of boards and being involved in the day-to-day stuff, to really be able to understand. And many times the monitors would come across and say, "I've got a guy in my office here, a young major that didn't make lieutenant colonel, and he doesn't know why, and I've looked at his record, and there's nothing that really stands out," but I'd be able to tell, you could really hone in on it. Sometimes it was just a case where an officer didn't do the kinds of things that maybe were expected, and maybe that was fate or assignment, never really had an outstanding record or showed anything extraordinary. By the same token he had never done anything really bad but had a sort of vanilla record, and couldn't compete with his peers. Remember that at that time there's war going on and everything else. They had experiences and performance, and so it was not anything against that particular officer, what he did wrong. It's just that he didn't do enough right, you know, because it's all based on the competition. So those are examples of people who come to me and say, "Would you kindly look at this?" I ended up doing a lot of officer counseling, although that wasn't part of the job, that's what I ended up doing, and the monitors tended to send over the cases where clearly they couldn't ascertain a clear reason why

somebody didn't make it, or somebody wanted an assessment of their career or something like that.

Allison: That must have been a little bit difficult at times.

Zinni: Well, my philosophy was you treat that officer the way you would want to be treated. They want honesty; they want your honest opinion. Sometimes you don't know how the board saw their function—you weren't on the board—but I can give them a judgment from what I see as to what might have happened, and where they—and sometimes there were just people up there that just wanted to know what they could do to improve their record, what kinds of things would help their case, where they were, how they stacked up compared to their peers and everything. So sometimes it was just sort of a career counseling kind of thing. And so—and I wouldn't say that the monitors didn't do a lot of that themselves; they certainly did. But when they ran into the one that was a little difficult to pick out exactly what might have been the reasons or the cases were so difficult to analyze—but then, seeing all the cases, and going through all the boards and everything else, you had a really good sense of that. And a lot of times, too—on the boards that I was on, I might have been a recorder or something else, or—if there was a tricky case, a lot of times I'd be asked to take a look at it.

Allison: Any particularly memorable cases?

Zinni: Yes. Well, sometimes you had some interesting things back in up there. I remember one case where we had a lawyer applying for augmentation. And as his briefer was going through the book—he's pretty astute—he says, "Something doesn't jive here. His years of service and his education. . . ." He had been an enlisted Marine, a legal clerk, had gotten out, supposedly gotten a law degree, come back in as a lawyer, and

now was a very good lawyer—his record was off the page, and really, praise for his legal work. He had gotten his degree in the United Kingdom, and we accepted law degrees from the United Kingdom and had passed the bar exam. But what this briefer found, when he looked at the years, it was impossible. I mean he didn't have enough time to get these degrees. I mean he had forged it; he never went to school. And of course, the implication, now that we'd "outed" this guy, who was a brilliant law clerk as a young NCO, and self-trained and had a record as a trial and defense counsel that was off the page, and of course, now, every case he was ever involved in now has to be reviewed and reconsidered.

Allison: Ah, really, right.

Zinni: But, you know, you run into some interesting cases like that. People that maybe had awards that weren't appropriate—sometimes it was just a matter of not being entered, but sometimes—I mean, we found cases of, unfortunately, officers that were wearing awards they didn't really [earn]—it's the value of the picture. People think pictures are basically only to look at their physical stature or their weight or something like that, but you find people who wore the wrong ribbons. And I had to check all that out.

Allison: Interesting. During this time General [Louis H.] Wilson [Jr.] becomes commandant. He was at Headquarters. Did you notice the effect of his leadership?

Zinni: Right. To be honest, there were a lot of issues and complaints. There was a little intrigue going on between the former Commandant and the Assistant Commandant, and issues about trying to influence the selection and everything else. And, of course, as a young major, you're watching this all from a distance. But when General Wilson came in, it was amazing. I mean here was a Medal of Honor recipient, World War II

hero, known for his strict adherence to standards, and it was like a breath of fresh air. He started really establishing and re-establishing and enforcing the standards. He was a model Marine in every respect, and as the Commandant, he began to really take on this, the Marine Corps' sort of renaissance in this all-volunteer force. I think that, combined with President Reagan coming in, and now in Washington—if you remember we get to that point where President Reagan wants us to wear uniforms in Washington, and this sort of resurgence of pride and everything else. So it was kind of a great time to be up there, watching all this.

Allison: Very noticeable.

Zinni: Yes.

Allison: All right, sir, and then as your time comes to an end there in June '77, you go to Command and Staff.

Zinni: Yes. I got selected for Command and Staff College, and that was a great year, like all times in school, at Quantico being amongst your peers. It was a time at Command and Staff College when the big emphasis now—at that time there was a small pamphlet written by Jeffrey Record and Martin Binkin called *Where Does the Corps Go From Here*. There was a questioning of the need for a Marine Corps. They were now saying the Marine Corps is, take them out of the jungle, the real need is in Europe to face off against the Soviets. The Marine Corps is not relevant there. We have now Bill Lind questioning the way we fight, attrition warfare, criticisms that we're not mechanized enough. We don't have the combat power. People are pushing us now towards becoming heavier, the ability to fight in the Fulda Gap, or on the flanks, and now this whole emphasis about the Marine Corps' need to heavy up, needs to be more

relevant against the Soviet threat, needs to look at itself in terms of a greater, stronger, combined arms, particularly mechanization. This whole emphasis, now. General Wilson focused on Twentynine Palms as a combined arms training center. We now have the beginnings of a concept for the LAV, light armor vehicles, combined mechanized task forces, and other things that people are trying to impose on us or force on us, rejustifying our existence. Now the rise of people beginning to think about maneuver warfare and a new design or a new concept as to the way you engage, instead of what the critics were saying, where it was an attrition-based philosophy.

So you hit Command Staff College while all this is bubbling up, where the students were interested in that. A lot of us had had side groups that were beginning to talk about these things. After hours, we would be engaged in this maneuver warfare debate, development. While I was there, we had formed a group to look at how the Marine Corps would mech up; should we mech up on a permanent basis and become more mechanized and mobile, with greater firepower, or would we be making a mistake doing that? Should we just have the wherewithal to just task-organize? Critics were saying that task-organization is not doing enough. You know, but General Wilson was trying to hold the line on that. General Wilson had convened a group of senior officers to look at this in the Marine Corps. Their results were leaking out. There were critics of the Marine Corps that were pressing on this, like Bill Lind and others. So it was an exciting time to be down there, and being engaged in this, it was not the typical academic period, because this idea of where the Marine Corps goes, challenging our basic operational concepts, challenging our basic organization, challenging our basic worth or utility for the security of the nation, meant that this was

an exciting year. And being in an academic environment at Quantico, and being able to really get into those things, and hear the debate, participate, think about it, like you do when you're in that environment, made it more exciting than normally it would have been.

Allison: So everybody's kind of looking for something different, changes to be made viewed through the negative Vietnam prism.

Zinni: Well, also, at the same time, they were beginning to talk about the maritime strategy. And now the Navy and the Marine Corps were beginning to look at what should be the maritime component to a strategy against a Soviet force, and so we were now beginning to look at the flanks of Europe. We were now beginning to look at Norway, Greenland, Iceland, the United Kingdom, the Gap, the GIUK gap, the southern flank, and so now the utility of naval forces and the Marine Corps, on the flanks of Europe, how we would operate in the Pacific against the Soviet threat and project that kind of power. This was also added to the mix. So again, all these things were swirling about, it was exciting times for people that, really, you know, it was intellectually very challenging.

Allison: And the focus was on Europe, the Cold War.

Zinni: The focus was on Europe, we were now going to put carriers in the fjords and everything else, and even the exercises, now, you had the major exercise in the northern flank of Europe, and on the southern flank of Europe, the Navy and Marine Corps, that the allies were participating and building up.

Allison: Did Lind advocate mechanization?

Zinni: Well, I first met him when I was at Headquarters Marine Corps. A friend of mine,

down here, they were meeting with him; there were little groups of officers who would get together after hours and discuss all these sorts of things. I was invited to one session down here at Quantico; these were informal.

Allison: These were informal, at the club or something?

Zinni: Yes, at the club or someone's home. And I came down. The first time I heard him, he was advocating this emphasis on maneuver warfare, but not maneuver, I mean, it was a mind-set, a way of thinking, a different way. Different way to assess the enemy, a different way to thinking about how you want to engage him, more effective or more efficient in the way you do things. Less attrition-based than sort of the traditional processing of terrain and forces and all that. And it was beginning to catch on; it was beginning to resonate. I think the effects of Vietnam, and people not understanding it, looking at sort of the doctrine and sort of the World War II conventional, trying to think about ways to be more creative on the flanks, again going back to Europe and elsewhere. And so that thinking was beginning to catch fire, and, you know, over the next decade, really a re-thinking, a renaissance. Probably when General Gray came in, really it became central to how the Marine Corps thought. But he also felt strongly about the Marine Corps' need to mechanize, be more mobile and more lethal; he was an advocate of that. He was promoting light-armored vehicles. He was trying to push the Marine Corps. We had General Victor Krulak come down and talk to our Command and Staff class. He wisely cautioned us to stay balanced and ready. So you had to be careful that you don't catch the trend of the day.

Allison: The fad of the day.

Zinni: The fad of the day, because he remembered when President Kennedy wanted the

Marine Corps to become the counterinsurgency force, become what Special Forces became. And the Marine Corps resisted it, and had they done it, they'd have become really irrelevant as Vietnam came down, and he said, "You have to think about the fact that you come from the sea. We're projected from the sea. You can't heavy yourself up so much that you're not liftable, you can't be moved, and you don't have the ability to be active." "And the key," he said, "is two things. Stay balanced. Don't go one way or the other. Retain this balance, and the second thing is to always be ready. I mean the hallmark of the Marine Corps is as a force in readiness." He said, "If you stay ready, and you can get to the scene of the crime, you'll be in the fight, and you'll be relevant." And I think that was how General Wilson felt. Stay balanced. Stay ready. That's the core—C-O-R-E—part of what the Marine Corps is all about. And there were others that were saying, no, you've got to make this move. I remember the 200th anniversary birthday ball, and secretary of defense was [James R.] Schlesinger. And he came to the birthday ball. Instead of this big, 200th anniversary, rah-rah, he was talking about the Marine Corps is going to be irrelevant if it doesn't change, and all this other stuff. So he even had from that level that kind of view—which, to me, seemed, and as I thought about this, I became more convinced that the need to stay balanced and stay ready was the way to go, as opposed to saying, "No, let's chase the latest trend." It was a lot of pressure. People like Lind and others were putting pressure on trying to get Congress and others to force us into these moves. And later on, General Wilson, because when he did the study groups, and I participated in one, it was General Gray, then-Brigadier General Gray, did the Reserve reconstruction part, and the other part that was done to look at mechanization and all. They were ready to

come down and actually recommend that the Marine Corps mech up on a permanent basis. Down here at Quantico, Concepts and Doctrine were writing all these Marine Corps combat arms task force, MCCATFs concepts and everything else. And General Wilson, to his credit, resisted it under a lot of pressure. Stay balanced, and stay relevant, and stay ready. Don't chase the latest trend.

Allison: And General Krulak was saying that, also.

Zinni: Yes.

Allison: Had you met his son at that time?

Zinni: No, I didn't know him until he was a general officer.

Allison: What was being said about aviation?

Zinni: Well, of course, General Wilson, then, was a believer—this is not the Marine Corps', you know, core of competency. But this is something we can do. We can mech up. As General Gray was to put it later to me, he said, "You have to think of the Marine Corps expeditionary forces, the MEFs, as the repository of combat power." We aren't like the Army or other forces that are already organized permanently along some structure lines. We had these repositories. You know we have tanks, and we have AAVs that have a secondary mission to be mechanized troop carriers. We have all these things, but we can put them together in so many different ways. Our strength is our ability to task organize.

Task organize to meet the mission, task organize to meet the lift requirements, and although it's difficult; people accused us of being jacks of all trades and masters of none. We can do all of that. Now, we aren't mech, but we can mech up. We aren't light infantry, but we can go light. We're not heavy infantry, but we can go heavy. We

are not air assault, but we can conduct heliborne operations and do those. And so, he said, the strength of the Marine Corps is that we have our primary mission, to project power from the sea, but then we can support any of these others, and task organize into doing them, and, again, it's readiness and training. It's hard because it puts a lot of things on your plate to be able to do, but that's where we're going to go. That's how we're going to do this. And it was a lot of heat, and later on, after Command Staff College, I was involved in a sort of, the proof of the pudding, in a major exercise.

Allison: As you go down to Camp Lejeune?

Zinni: I was at Command and Staff College, and Colonel Jack Sheehan was my monitor, and he called me up, and he said, "You have too much FMF time. I can't send you back to the FMF." I said, "Jack, I want to go back to the FMF."

Allison: You were friends, from earlier.

Zinni: Yes. Plus, he owed me a favor from a job I took at Headquarters Marine Corps that he didn't want *[laughter]*.

Allison: Is that right? *[laughter]* Do you want to elaborate on that?

Zinni: Well, he was going to be the plans officer in MMOA 3, and he had an opportunity to go across and be the majors' monitor. And he really wanted to do that. And I was going to go to training. I was going to get a split tour and go into the Training division. And so Gordon Busby said, you know, he was going to lose both of us, so the only way he would let Jack go is if I would become the plans officer.

I did, and I joked, I said to Jack, "You owe me on this one." And he said, "Look, I can send you to the FMF." He said, "Although you have too much FMF time, but I can send you there, but you have to think about this. You would be coming up on the end

of your tour in the FMF, and at best be a selected lieutenant colonel if it were to work out that way, and you could miss an opportunity, then, to command a battalion.” There wasn’t command selection then. And I didn’t believe in trying to time or game it. To me, I’m an infantry officer, the Fleet Marine Force is what you live for, like the vast majority of Marine Corps officers, and I just wanted to go back. Let the chips fall where they may. I just wanted to go.

So, as we’re getting toward the end of the course, Jack calls me up, and he says, going back to the business about proving the concept, we were now coming up on the end of that year of ’78; the major exercise on the northern flank of Europe, was a series of exercises, Northern Wedding, Bold Guard. And in this particular exercise, the Marine Corps was going to go very heavy. We were going to have a regimental landing team, RLT-2 with a lot of combat power with, beside their active battalions and a reserve battalion, the entire tank battalion from 2d Marine Division, the entire amphibious tractor battalion, and so this was going to be a heavy mech, heavy helicopter force, 17 amphibious ships were in the amphib part of this. So this was going to be a big exercise. General Wilson wanted to put a lot of pressure on the 2d Marine Division and II MEF, and actually 4th MEB, if you remember, this time the MEB was going to do the exercise. General Gray was commanding the MEB at the time, but there was pressure going on to say, “You have to prove that we can do this, task organize to do it.” And the critics, the Linds and others of the world, were out to prove that you can’t do it, that we would fail.

Allison: In a task-organized fashion?

Zinni: Yes, that task organization won’t get it, that fighting in that environment, or exercise

in that environment, and we had German aggressors, the Panzers and so this was going to be a pretty difficult exercise. A lot of pressure on the Marine Corps, and a lot of people that wanted to see this fail, frankly. So the point of that story is, Jack calls me up and says, “We have to fill up the 2d Marines, because they’re the ones who’re going to be doing this, and we’re going to be the landing team under 4th MEB,”—MAB, at the time under General Gray. And he said, Colonel Jerry Turley was the regimental commander, and one of the battalions needs a three. So he said, “If you want to do this,” he says, “Colonel Turley’s going to call you, sort of check you out on the phone, and then, if he accepts you, you’ll go down and be the three, but the thing is, you can’t take any leave, any time off. You’ve got to shoot out on graduation day, right down.” So I said, “Yeah, I want it.” And so I get a call from Colonel Turley. I shoot down there, left the family here at Quantico, they moved down later, and arrive at 2d Marines. Everything was removed from their plate. I mean, there was no mess duty, guard duty. They were continuously in the field. I joined 3/2 as a three [operations officer]. My battalion commander was Don Gardner, and one of our company commanders was Jim Conway.

Allison: Company K.

Zinni: Yes, and I joined them. They had been in the field for literally almost entirely day-on-stay-on for six months, and it was to be about another three months of this, and then we were headed over. So I joined them and it was fast and furious in the meantime. Three-two [3/2] was also the battalion landing team for the ready MEU, at that time MAU, down there. So in addition to being the key part of this big exercise coming up, in those days you had the air contingency force, and standby amphibious requirement.

And so it was intense. I mean I loved it. But we were doing landing plans, and I was blessed by being in Command and Staff College; I ended up being the three for the huge last exercise as the Marine Amphibious Force operations officer. We had a couple of great instructors, and guys like Walt Fitts, and Ernie Cook and a bunch of others. The then-Lieutenant Colonel Cook especially knew his stuff when it came to amphibious operations; taught me a lot about landing plans and all that. All that, fresh in my mind, The first part of the Northern Wedding was an amphibious landing in the Shetland Islands and Denmark, and then we roll into the mechanized portion; we were the heliborne assault force initially, then we morphed into task organizing into the mech organization. So it was very complex, the series of things we had to do. And it was the three's, depending how you look at it, challenge or nightmare, because we had to generate all these orders. We had all these training requirements to get through. The troops had to master the amphibious part of this. They had to master the helicopter-borne assault part of this. We had to master the meched up piece of this. All sort of from the beginning.

Allison: There's not a lot of past precedent in the Marine Corps doing this.

Zinni: No, well, I mean, we had been doing Northern Weddings, Bold Guards, but not on this scale. But, General Wilson made it very clear that we could not fail in this. And it was a great regiment. General, then-Lieutenant Colonel Mike Sheridan had one of the battalions: 2/2. It was a lot of pressure, a lot of training. The troops had really given it their all. And we went over and conducted the exercise and it was a great success. General Gray was really pleased with this, lots, a lot of praise. A lot of people trying to find fault with it, you know, back here, because people did not like the idea that

General Wilson approved this, had actually gone against the recommendation of the board of officers that he had convened that had actually recommended—I believe it was the Haynes Board, I’m not sure.

Allison: There was a Haynes Board.

Zinni: Yes, it might have been the Haynes Board. Maybe it wasn’t. But they had recommended the other—

Allison: Mechanized.

Zinni: Mechanize, yes. Mech it up. So we came back from that pretty well exhausted. I mean we had given it our all, and I thought that was a great experience; I learned a lot. I got to try everything I learned in Command and Staff College. The experiences were tremendous. Getting familiar with the COC [combat operations center] was pure operational, and I came back, and we were then, obviously, splitting up. And Colonel Turley had asked me what I wanted to do. And I said I wanted to go to a deploying battalion, and I would like to be an executive officer, because now I had been a three, since I’m a major, be an executive officer, and he says, well, “I’ll make sure it happens.” So the next thing I know, I get orders to the 8th Marines, and to 1/8.

Allison: You were XO for—

Zinni: Yes, XO for 1/8. And what struck me as unusual about this, is 1/8 was just coming back from a Med cruise, and they rotated the Mediterranean deployments around the entire division at the time, and it was going to go to one of the other regiments, and I thought, I’m coming to 8th Marines; they’re not going anywhere! And of course when I had joined 1/8, it was the typical come back from a cruise and lose everybody. I checked in and the new battalion commander came in, named Terry Cooper, later to be

Lieutenant General Terry Cooper, and that's when the decision was made to go to PrePass, the new personnel system. The priority was going to go to deploying units, and the decision was made that the 8th Marines would be the Mediterranean regiment. There was a lot of arguing and debate as to whether you should have regiments geared to particular missions, but the decision was 1/8 would be the first PrePass unit. So I joined 1/8 and worked up with him, with Terry Cooper, and we'd go to the Med. We'd make a Med deployment, and I'd do that as an executive officer, come back, and now Mike Sheridan comes to the 8th Marines, the regimental commander, and when I get back, he—and General [David M.] Twomey is the commanding general. He has me as the regimental executive officer, moves me up to that position, as a major, now.

Allison: Wow.

Zinni: Yes, that's wow. General Twomey had a policy that the senior lieutenant colonels had to be regimental executive officers. And he also had a policy that all the battalions had to be commanded by lieutenant colonels. And so right away Sheridan had me, as a major, not as a select—the board hadn't even met yet—as a regimental executive officer.

Allison: Twomey had the division, right?

Zinni: Right, Twomey. Colonel Sheridan says to me, "I'm going to give you 2/8. You're going to be the CO at 2/8." So I thought, "Is are fine words—I mean, I'm a major. I'm not even—no board has met yet or anything." And he says, "No, you're going to get 2/8." I said, "But, sir, you know, General Toomey, he's . . . " He says, "Well, you let me handle that." So then I get a call from the monitor, saying, "We're going to move you after two years." So I say, "Wait a minute," and he said, "The only way we would

leave you down there now, because you have too much FMF time—the only way you would have stayed down there is if the commanding general came in and said you were getting the command. That certified you were getting a command.” So Colonel Sheridan goes to General Twomey and says, “I’m going to give Zinni 2/8.” Now, there were lieutenant colonels that were waiting to command in the division.

Allison: You’re still a major, though, right?

Zinni: I’m still a major, a pure major. I mean, not a select or anything. So General Twomey says, “No way.” So Colonel Sheridan and General Twomey get into a real heated discourse over an extended number of weeks. I thought, “Oh, this is not good.” Now the monitors are beginning to pressure, “If we don’t hear by such and such a date.” And I remember to this day, General Twomey—we were at Camp Geiger. General Twomey’s helicopter flies out there and lands, and from obviously hearing, listening around, he’s going to have this confrontation with Colonel Sheridan over me, and General Twomey comes storming into the office, and of course, you have to come through the executive officer’s office to get the regimental commander. He goes storming past me, and of course I say, “Good afternoon, sir,” and he, “Rrrrr.” And I can hear what’s going on in there, and Colonel Sheridan is [saying] “Its my damn regiment, and I can make battalion command selections,” and General Twomey says, “There’s division policy.” And I heard them go back and forth and back and forth, and Colonel Sheridan’s saying, “If you can’t let me run my regiment, then find yourself another regimental commander.” And they’re going at it pretty well. They really respected each other, because obviously Colonel Sheridan’s reputation was great. General Twomey was this great big blustery guy, so it was clear the mutual respect,

but they were going at it. So finally I hear General Twomey say, “Okay, Mike. You can make him the battalion commander, but I’m going to be keeping an eye on him. One screwup, and he goes, and you go!” *[laughter]* And he comes storming out and I go in to see Colonel Sheridan. I said, “Colonel Sheridan, I didn’t want you to get cross-ways with the division commander,” and he says, “Get out of here!” So I . . . *[laughter]* And we have the change of command, and I’m in command of 2/8 and General Twomey’s in this stand, with kind of a scowl on his face, and I’m thinking, “Boy, this is not likely to be happy day. I’m in command. I’ve got to get this right.” So, I got command of 2/8. Then-Colonel Sheridan left, and the Colonel [James R.] Joy comes in as the regimental commander, and he starts manning up the units, making the assignments. I get as my executive officer Ray Smith. I could not ask for a finer—obviously, operationally he’s experienced. I had a set of company commanders that was off the page, people like Rick Zilmer and Ray Cole, and great people in the battalion.

Everything just seemed to click for us. I mean the timing of the staff NCOs and officers assigned was off the page, I had General Barrow’s son, platoon commander, and I’m just hitting the wave tops, so a tremendous set of officers. And everything seemed to fall in place. So we had the highest re-enlistment rate. We go to the rifle range and everybody qualifies. We go to Twentynine Palms and really light the place up on our attacks and really get great kudos from General [Harold G.] Glasgow out there, and then Colonel Turley had gone out there to run the exercise. So it just seemed to be one thing after another. It seemed to be just a blessed battalion, and primarily because we were literally T/O [table of organization] in officers, T/O in staff NCOs,

and just about T/O in NCOs. It was remarkable, because the leadership just seemed to take care of itself, and they were quality people. And I got selected, then, as lieutenant colonel. But I got selected, and we deployed to the Mediterranean, a Med cruise, which is a pretty exciting cruise. I mean, you start out there. There's a NEO down in South America we get vectored off for. It doesn't quite come off, and we're in Spain when there's an attempted coup, and we ended up off the coast of Beirut for a month—we didn't go in—

Allison: That was the beginning of some of the civil war-type disturbance in Lebanon.

Zinni: Yes. We obviously had the BLT series exercises out there, great battalion, really, again learned a lot. And when I came back from that tour with the 2d Marine Division, then I got orders, and again, I had to come back to Quantico, and I wanted to get into the Education Center and back into teaching.

Allison: Why was that?

Zinni: And I just thought, at that stage of the game, I really felt, after those experiences, that I just felt operationally, I had experienced a lot, learned a lot, and just felt like I wanted to not only continue learning, and the best way to do that is to teach, but I enjoyed being an instructor and teacher at Quantico, to me, that's the closest thing to being in the Fleet Marine Force. So, I was then sent to Command and Staff College as an instructor.

Allison: Do you remember relieving Dick Camp as the XO of 1/8?

Zinni: It was a little tricky because Dick was going off to some assignment, but initially he was going to be TAD. So he was TAD when I came in. And it wasn't clear that I'd be the executive officer, it might have been that I would have been the three, which

would have been okay with me, so I was sort of temporarily the XO until Dick got himself sorted out, but it took a long time. So by the time it did, I'd been the XO for so long that Lieutenant Colonel Cooper felt it was established, and so Dick didn't really come back. He had been on TAD, but I did replace him.

Allison: You had a number of important officers you are serving with. Can you talk about their characteristics?

Zinni: Through this whole experience, I mean from Colonel Turley to Colonel Gardner then Colonel Sheridan to Colonel Joy, all—General Twomey, the division commander. General Gray is the division commander when I came back from the Med. Colonel Cooper. I'm just blessed with these tremendous leaders, all of whom I've learned a great deal from. And each of them have their own sort of strengths, some very unique. One of Colonel Cooper's, at the time, was his attention to detail, his emphasis on things like making sure when we deployed that everything back home was taken care of. The families were taken care of. The family network, or trees as we called them. This is before it became much more formalized in the Marine Corps. This was the beginning ideas of this, and working through this, how we took care of troops. He just wanted to be sure that those things sometimes that don't get enough attention. You come back, some poor Marine, his gear's missing. You don't know what happened to it, and something happened to his car; poor kid parked his car in the wrong place. We're going to have a lot that allows protection—he worked with the regiment to get an area where we put everything under lock and key. It's going to be inventoried thoroughly. The Marines are going to re-inventory when we come back. I mean we're putting into place these things that just made the whole quality of life much better,

especially for deployment. And Colonel Cooper really committed to that, too. He was also, which really fit General Twomey's style, he was also a stickler, as General Twomey was, that we are going to get back to doing things the good, old-fashioned way in the Marine Corps. General Twomey emphasized drill. So every morning, every unit in the 2d Marine Division had to have one hour of drill. And, you know, a lot of moaning and groaning, but after a while, as you looked around the 2d Marine Division, you saw units marching. Troops looked sharp. That drill in the morning really pulled people together, and it was a testament to General Twomey that this has been a hallmark of the Corps. This is something that teaches unit discipline, teaches coordination, teamwork, and small things like this. When we went off on the Mediterranean deployment, in 1/8, it was also the time for the big Southern flank exercise, the 8th Marines came over, Colonel Sheridan as the RLT CO. So I'd previously done the Northern Wedding-Bold Guard; now we did the Southern flank one, landings in Turkey and everything else as part of the maritime strategy. Display Determination [was] one of those, and as the executive officer, I handled the log train, and we've had this huge train, in 1/8, because we were one of the lead mech units, and we had organized our base camp in a [certain] way. When General Twomey flew over, he saw it, and he came down [and told] Colonel Sheridan, "This is the way things should be organized. Everything is on line." I mean, we did a tent peg drill when we put down the pegs, the security and defense, the way we organized our motor pool and everything else, very tactical and organized, structured. General Twomey was really excited about it. Of course, Colonel Cooper said, "Well, that's my XO. I mean he does all this." I felt really good about that, but really in effect this is what General Twomey

instilled in everybody in his division. This was the practice; it wasn't haphazard. You weren't going to find units who weren't doing this. We had gone back to basics, you know, and he put a lot of emphasis on basics. People criticized it, "Oh, the Gunny," and all this stuff that, but we ended up being able to do the basic blocking and tackling extremely well. That's what he really wanted to see. And you can build on that, but the fundamental quality of the individual and what that individual Marine has to be able to do and know—the small-unit training, the basic good order and discipline, all these sorts of things, attention to detail with the emphasis on the division at the time. And I thought it was remarkably effective in the division; it made it much more proficient in everything we did.

Allison: Can you tell me about the changing administration, going to consolidated administration procedures?

Zinni: Yes, we went to the first consolidated admin, which means no more company admin. Of course, it had its growing pains; we were fortunate in that we had a warrant officer as our personnel officer that set it up. As a matter of fact, he had been the personnel officer of the 2d Marines when I was there. But he set it up. In the beginning it was difficult, because you could clearly see the advantages to this. But like anything else, company commanders giving up control of their own admin, they weren't happy about [that]. And then trying to restructure it, take care of the consolidated admin, do it on the battalion level but still meet the needs of the company commanders and 1st sergeants and their demands, was difficult. You could see the growing pains. You could see that you had to go through this, that it had benefits, but in the beginning, as one of the first units to do it, it was hard.

Allison: Your unit was the first in the whole Marine Corps to implement it.

Zinni: And it was tough. As the executive officer, of course, in 1/8, we had to get it done.

And we certainly had our growing pains. You didn't want to turn off the company commanders and the first sergeants. You had to figure a way to make sure their needs are accommodated, but at the same time, the battalion couldn't just be a collection of company admin units; it had to be a battalion. It had to have that kind of structure and organization, too. So you pull on a warrant officer who's getting torn between two sides, but he did a good job. You start to get the information technology support for it, too.

Allison: Computers?

Zinni: Simplified, supportive at that time. Later on the technology, then fit the system we went to, and those days we didn't have the technology to make it as efficient, but it made much more sense.

Allison: Did that become a permanent change?

Zinni: Yes. Correct.

Allison: Something else that was new, in that battalion was restructuring the battalion from four to three rifle companies. Do you recall anything significant?

Zinni: Yes. That was maybe the most passionate issue of the time. Losing the fourth rifle company was extremely difficult. We had done that before. As a matter of fact, as a young company commander coming back from Vietnam, when I got Delta 1/8, Delta had been in cadre, and I had to re-establish Delta Company and put it back up. So we had the fourth company. Now we were going to take it out again. So we'd been through this, and we were back to it. And there were all sorts of arguments as to why

the Marine Corps has four rifle companies, why we have big fire teams and squads, and the initial concept that it's basically offensive-oriented troops when we do assault operations, whether it's amphibious or whatever. You have to have the ability to absorb casualties and to operate, and it gave you more flexibility in terms of maneuver. So all the arguments were certainly there. But I think it primarily became an issue of affordability, that it moved us to the three rifle companies.

Allison: And a weapons company.

Zinni: And a weapons company, which then became obviously a new concept, and now with the emphasis on fire support coordination, that weapons company commander also became the battalion's fire support coordinator. So now you had the weapons company commander [who] had not only his company command role, and is overseeing the employment of the weapons, but he also has this staff obligation as the fire support coordinator. And that became, then—in my view, that is the individual, at the battalion level, you had to select pretty carefully. And I was blessed with a great guy, Tom Harleman, who I had nominated for the Leftwich Award, and actually became the 2d Marine Division's nominee for the Leftwich Award for that year. And he got exceptional kudos out of Twentynine Palms for his work in the battalion.

Allison: So he's got to be a pretty astute guy, pretty on the ball.

Zinni: Yes, he's got to do all the coordination. He's got to understand that business cold. Again, General Wilson putting in place at Twentynine Palms the CAXs, the CAXs were a very demanding exercise. I can't think—in 39 years in the Marine Corps, of a more challenging event than the CAX to go through.

Allison: That's when you pull everything together: the combined arms, air, ground, artillery.

Zinni: Yes, everything.

Allison: What about weapons, any new weapons coming in? There is some mention of the Dragon replacing the 106.

Zinni: Yes, the Dragon, obviously a significant improvement, much more mobile than the 106—lighter, easier to operate. Earlier we had gotten TOWS [tube-launched, optically tracked, wire-guided missile], but the TOWS were at the regiment, the regimental TOW platoon. But obviously when you deployed as a BLT, you had a TOW unit with you, and so TOWs and Dragons. All that was part of the whole effort of looking at the mechanized warfare and what we would face and then the need for antiarmor capability was becoming more significant, and the development of these kinds of weapons systems.

Allison: This must have been a really career-broadening experience, working with NATO and all.

Zinni: Yes, I mean, for me, obviously. I was applying directly everything I had learned in Command and Staff College, and again, in a year in Command and Staff College, when the emphasis now was on the operational side. When we were talking about the evolution of maneuver warfare, thinking in terms of being able to task organize and to morph into different formations. We did the amphibious exercises on a large scale. We did the mechanized, the heliborne assault. Doing that from a three's perspective, and then an executive officer in a battalion, and as part of an RLT doing this southern flank, and the deployments in the Mediterranean, and then coming back as BLT commander in the Mediterranean, and then taking the units through the CAX and everything else. So the number and scale and scope and complexity of all the operational things I was

seeing over the course of those three years, was to my mind, exceptional, and really, personally broadening and educational for me.

Allison: Any perspectives on working with NATO? What that does? The impressions it made on you?

Zinni: Yes, and I mean, obviously we're working with allies in all those experiences; we had Allied troops. I mean even on exercises when I was a BLT commander, we had attached to us or under operational control NATO units, in the north with the Germans and the Dutch and the others. And General Gray was really good in the Med when we were there and talking to us about NATO and how things operated in NATO. It wasn't just a matter of, "Well, you're just Battalion 3," he really wanted to get us involved in understanding how NATO functioned and what we did with it, and then how we'd fit, and what the importance of what we did is.

Allison: Any perspectives on morale among your Marines, in 1/8 and also 2/8? I noticed in 1/8, there were some difficulties. Remember the troop throwing the radio overboard?

Zinni: Oh, yes, we had some disgruntled troops in the comm platoon, and one troop in particular had thrown some radios, after an exercise, overboard. I would say from the time looking at the end of Vietnam and watching now the evolution of quality and discipline, you saw it steadily getting better. And when General Barrow became the commandant, he decided that we were tolerating people within the ranks of the Corps to keep the numbers up, that we shouldn't. Now, we probably were. And, of course, we were re-adjusting from Vietnam. Again, this—like all the services, the all-volunteer military, of course, we were back to all volunteers with no draftees after Vietnam. You saw, in each, I mean, from my time in the 2d Marine Division coming

back from Vietnam, every time you saw it getting a little better, a little better, a little better, a little better. And I would say that from when I first went to the 2d Marine Division, after Command and Staff College, you still saw probably that there were people we should not be keeping, probably, in the Marine Corps. And General Barrow as the Commandant insisting that we take a harder line even if it means thinning the rank in some respect. By the time I left the 2d Marine Division, we had arrived, I thought. We went into drug testing for everybody, zero tolerance. You saw what began at the end of Vietnam, and General Wilson's time, now General Barrows—by the time I left the 2d Marine Division. Then, in '81, I thought we had established the kind of Marine Corps that we see basically the quality today. So '75 to '81, or I guess we came out of Vietnam; it was more like '71. So in that decade, from '71 to '81, we had made steady progress to bring it up.

Allison: Turn it around.

Zinni: Turn it around. And, of course, that all had to be balanced by operational readiness, make sure your numbers are up and everything else. I mean there were—it wasn't easy, like you could just snap your fingers and make it happen. But, to me, in watching that whole evolution and being down in the pits at that time, by the time 1981 rolled around—and other things are beginning to happen. We went to professional career development for NCOs and staff NCOs. Staff NCO academies, there were some, and whether somebody went or not was kind of hit or miss, and whether the commanders were going to let move—now it became mandatory. We had a progressive education system for NCOs and staff NCOs, quality demands on them were much harder now. We had gotten over the point where we were taking quality staff NCOs and making

them officers during Vietnam; the war sort of ripping the ranks apart, so that had ended. I told General Twomey this one time when he asked me what I thought was the single most significant thing that made the battalion as good as it was, and I said, “Clearly, it was the quality of the staff NCOs.” And, I mean, I had good officers, that wasn’t unique, to have good officers. The training was obviously better, the focus, we were doing things you could put your hands on, that had a purpose and all, the CAX, the deployments and NATO and all the exercises and that sort of thing. The primary thing that I saw, I was watching the quality of the staff NCOs grow. That may have been the most significant thing. I’ll give you an example. When I was a battalion commander, I had 52 staff NCOs. I was actually one over T/O. And we took the PFT, and I had one staff NCO fail PFT. He was a staff sergeant. Now, that may not sound like a big deal today, but back then, that was remarkable, because a lot of the staff NCOs weren’t in shape.

Allison: Like the one at Headquarters Marine Corps.

Zinni: Yes. So one staff NCO failed, he happened to be the career planner—and he was a good career planner. I mean we led the division in re-enlistments and everything else, and he was a hard worker, but he let himself go [physically]. Of course we had the mandatory remedial PFT program. I placed him in there. The next thing I know—boom, boom, boom—there’s a knock on my door, and it’s the sergeant major and the first sergeants. And they come into my office, and the sergeant major says to me, “Sir. The staff NCO mess of 2/8” (I didn’t know there was a staff NCO mess of 2/8) “is insulted and embarrassed by the failure of one in our ranks to have not passed the physical fitness test.” I said, “I appreciate that.” They said, “And we would like him

not to be on the remedial PFT program. We would like you to place him under our supervision, and we guarantee you he will be at first class on the next PFT.” So I said, “Have at it, sergeant major.” So, I got to tell you, I had one first sergeant that ran 16-minute three miles. So I had some studs in the staff NCO ranks, including my sergeant major who was a big runner.

Allison: Do you remember their names, sir?

Zinni: Sergeant Major Welch. So every day, at noontime, the sergeant major and the first sergeant had this staff sergeant outside my window in my office at the pull-up bars. Every day, and they were deliberately in front of my office, and I’d go to PT at lunch. Before I went to PT, they would show up out there with this poor staff sergeant, surrounded by first sergeants, sergeant major, they would do the pull-ups, sit-ups, and take him on a run, but they’d start in front of my office, and next PFT, he was first class. And that’s just small, it’s sort of an anecdote, but it’s indicative of the change we were seeing. I mean, the pride in the staff NCOs was amazing. They didn’t seem to be, as a body, as passive. We had some great staff NCOs from Vietnam, and many of them we made temporary officers and ripped from the ranks, as I said. We didn’t have a career development program of education and maybe we should have, and that needed to be done and came into place now. They go to a staff NCO academy, and first sergeants’ school, and now they have a career development program, so that motivated them, too. It allowed them to advance and understand and educate, and we encouraged off-duty education. I was just watching this sort of birth of a new staff NCO corps; it was really impressive. And more than anything else, I think, that really struck me. It was almost as if I was seeing the staff NCO corps that I saw when I first

went out into the Fleet, before Vietnam; because that is always the backbone of the Marine Corps. That's what I was taught, as a lieutenant—the importance of that staff NCO. And now we were not only re-establishing that, because we had few officers compared to other services to enlisted. It's really the staff NCOs that run the Marine Corps, especially in the operational forces. And we had gone through that bad patch, and now it was re-established. And now the quality was such that it just made your eyes water. And I thought that was the most significant thing I saw in terms of morale, individual confidence, and that was a necessary ingredient that I think the Wilsons and the Barrows knew had to be in place to get that back, and of course they knew that from before.

I mean now, I look now at the staff NCOs in the Marine Corps, and I see them, and I think, God, they could be officers; easily. We just have created such a wealth of talent out there and developed them and the way they're motivated. It's inspiring. That may be the biggest thing I've seen happen, the biggest major transformation. So those are some key decisions by the Commandants and other things that have shaped our post-Vietnam Marine Corps.

Allison: Any perspectives on the air mix, the ACEs [air combat elements] for the MAUs you participated in?

Zinni: Yes, obviously these were composite units when we went out, much like the BLT is; they obviously had heavy lift, and we built around medium squadrons and had attack helicopters and that sort of thing, and we were beginning to see—I didn't see it on my deployment then—but we were now beginning to talk about the AV-8s deployment, which was to come later.

Allison: Is this something that was needed? Because I know that you were getting some CAS [close air support] from the Air Force and the Navy on these amphibious landings but no Marine CAS.

Zinni: I think there were two great decisions that came later, and both of them were controversial. The first decision was to deploy the AV-8s onto the carriers, on the amphib decks. I think there was a lot of apprehension about that, and, of course, the first generation of AV-8s, like any other new thing, there were a lot of issues and problems, but that made sense, that gave you tremendous flexibility, that gave you tremendous combat power; it means you didn't have to move carriers places where you didn't need a full carrier capability, but you needed something beyond attack helos. That gave you that flexibility.

Allison: Plus a little air defense, I guess.

Zinni: Plus a little air defense. So we're here in places like Somalia, where you don't need a carrier out there, but having fixed-wing aircraft that can come off a carrier deck and don't need a base ashore. It's impressive, there's a certain demonstration of combat power, too, that helps you ashore. The second decision, which I was very supportive of although there were a lot of people in the Marine Corps who were not [in favor of], putting the squadrons on carriers. And I've got to tell you, and I'm sort of fast-forwarding to later in life as a CinC [commander in chief of a component command], but I'd go out to those carriers, and I would hear from the CAG, the carrier air group commander, and from others, that the Marine squadron was the benchmark. The Marine squadron, in terms of discipline, and in terms of competition and challenge, the Marines always were motivational. And the CAGs loved them. The carrier

commanders and the battle group commanders always loved having the Marine squadrons. The other thing, too, is I think it made our aviation more relevant. We were finding that Marine aviation wasn't getting into the fray. It wasn't participating in enforcement of no-fly zones; I had to really push to get that to happen. That was basically the Air Force. Marines weren't aboard the carriers that are out here, so when these things came up, here you had Navy and Air Force there, engaging, and where's the Marines' air? And so the carrier got them into the fray right away, the carrier deployments. There was worry within the Marine Corps that now they would become Navy squadrons, in effect. That if they were needed, if we ever had to deploy the MEFs, they would be absent, those squadrons, because you couldn't take them off carriers, but I thought that given the crunch and the shrinking in size, we needed to pick up that role that was a natural naval extension of our capability. It got Marine aviation into the fray. It showed our flexibility. Not that I didn't appreciate some of the arguments, but I thought it was the right thing to do, and it set the standard. I mean, I would go aboard those carriers when I was a commander at CentCom [Central Command], and they would all say, "Sir, you gotta go down and see our Marine squadron. I mean these guys are great." One time I went aboard, and from the time I hit the carrier deck, they kept talking about the sergeant major of the squadron. "Oh, you've got to meet the sergeant major of the squadron. Oh, the sergeant major this. Sergeant major that." Everybody's telling me about the sergeant major, from the carrier battle group commander to the CO of the carrier to the CAG, all the other Navy squadrons. So I meet the sergeant major. I walk in, and SHE is, I mean dynamite! And she's a legend on the ship. I mean, to me, it's just the kind of thing you expect about

the Marines, just another capability and flexibility, that it was important to demonstrate, and important to pick up the slack, and I think we were in danger of having the Marine Corps fixed-wing aviation being pushed aside.

Allison: Marginalized.

Zinni: Marginalized, because of the way things were working out. The forward deployed air became Air Force air. They were forward deployed for [Operation] Northern Watch over Iraq, forward deployed for [Operation] Southern Watch. They were picking up this expeditionary capability and the chief of staff of the Air Force when I was combatant commander, Mike Ryan—we had gone to National War College together—and he said to me, “I have no pride in authorship. I’ll steal the ideas from the Marine Corps; we’re going to become expeditionary.” And that was the emphasis of the Air Force; demonstrate their expeditionary character, one thing—that’s our second nature. And I think it was important for us to get out there into the rotations, which we eventually did. General [James L.] Jones really pushed for that. We were able to get into the taking turns out there and rotation, and then getting Marine aviation on the carriers. That sort of, I think, emphasized our hallmark of being expeditionary, which we’re about to lose if we aren’t careful. And which we do much better.

Allison: Being expeditionary.

Zinni: Yes, yes, especially ashore, and everything else. We can do things in a much more austere environment. You have to go out there to demonstrate that. You can’t just say you’ll do it but not be there. That has to be part of the demonstration, the capability. It has to be part of “what have you done for me lately” kind of an answer.

Allison: Actually do it. Don’t talk about it. You brought up an interesting point when you were

talking about that: women. Women were coming into the Marine Corps. This is another change that's occurring in these rebuilding years, '71 to '81.

Zinni: Yes, and I actually saw it at Headquarters. General Cushman had opened up every MOS with the exception of the combat arms, [which] at that time included aviation—which later became open to women—infantry, artillery, and tanks; he said, all others are open. Well, now we're getting a flood of requests, and I remember the first woman officer that wanted to be in EOD [explosive ordnance disposal], and all the new engineers, and everybody went through, "Oh my God, we did it," and we watched Basic School, first of all, women now coming to Camp Barrett instead of their Basic School, which was different. It [had been] down there at main side Quantico.

Allison: That was about 1976.

Zinni: Yes. And then they had separate platoons, and then they went to integrated platoons, on each level everybody wondered how's this going to work out, how will it work out, and we did it. It kind of sought its own level. The women Marines demonstrated their competence and capability. Obviously the generation of Marines coming in were more used to seeing women, much different than my generation. They saw them on the soccer field as kids, and everything else, so they accepted them as peers more readily. So the changes sort of fit the generational changes that were occurring, and they had found their niche and proven themselves. In a more broad context, beyond the Marine Corps, when I had command of CentCom, I had the first woman pilot go into combat, F-18 Navy pilot that flew into Iraq, and the first Air Force B-52 pilot that flew. I got to observe women in first-time kinds of roles. As you begin to move up, you see more women in senior positions on your staff, senior positions in command. I know later on,

as a commander, I had a battalion command; my communications battalions and others, you see women now for the first time stepping into those roles. And of course we're beginning to see them move to more senior positions in the general officer ranks.

When I was at III MEF, we had the first general officer commander of an operational force, the FSSG [force service support group] out there.

Allison: Carol Mutter?

Zinni: Carol Mutter. Great lady, did a fantastic job. The FSSG was a going concern on our exercises in Korea and everything else. When I was CO of 9th Marines, she had done an exceptional job.

Allison: No women were on floats at that time, were they?

Zinni: No.

Allison: That came a little bit later.

Zinni: Yes, a little bit later, and, you know, as the ships were becoming modified to accommodate women, we saw it on the Navy's side, and we began to see them deploy on the Marine Corps' side. And later on, when I was the commander of I MEF, of course, I had women on my staff, and we were on operations in Somalia and everywhere else they were with us. In the field, basically with the same conditions that everybody else is under, pretty harsh conditions.

Allison: I noticed, in the command chronologies for 1/8, on liberty calls, you were doing civic action. Any perspectives on that?

Zinni: No, I mean, all the MEUs and phibrons [amphibious squadrons] had civic actions funds and capabilities, and to us it served not only the ambassador of goodwill and great humanitarian purpose, but I think it gave a positive something for the troops to

participate in. I mean, they felt good about going out and doing the—they weren't big things, but the small things that you could do on those deployments, I think, made the troops feel good. It just wasn't all about going out and setting your hair on fire. You can do some good things and participate in some things you can feel proud of and better the lot of some people out there.

Allison: Right. There were some liberty risks.

Zinni: Well, you know you play hard, you . . .

Allison: From the records I was really surprised at the number of NJPs [non-judicial punishment] occurring.

Zinni: You know, pretty much, the NJP numbers were standard for the time.

Allison: Is that right?

Zinni: Yes. Of course, NJP could be everything from somebody fell asleep on fire watch, and obviously maybe gets EPD [extra police duties] or something like that. So the NJPs run the spectrum. You know, but I think you end up with a sense—now, today, because you don't see that—is that these seem high. But at the time, they weren't high. If you were to take the same stats from, let's say the three battalions I was in, if you were to go from 3/2 to 1/8 to 2/8, and not because I commanded 2/8, but you would see, in that time, these numbers dropping. As a matter of fact, when we deployed, as 2/8, we had no UAs [unauthorized absences] on embark day.

Allison: Which was unheard of.

Zinni: Which was unheard of! And again, I go back to the staff NCOs and their quality. We had the lowest UA rate in the 2d Marine Division, and we deployed with no UAs. And when General Twomey asked me again, why, I said staff NCOs. Frankly, they made

sure everybody's there. They had to go get two guys *[laughter]* that day of embarkation, but it was changing. One reason why maybe 2/8 was at the top of the pack was we were on PrePass getting ready to be deployed. We were filling up, and we were T/O. So maybe another battalion that maybe had a little bit more in those areas didn't have the numbers, yet. Their turn would come as they got on the PrePass. The other thing that's misleading, you can look at a high number; like you can look at, here, at the thing you gave me, where in May, in 1/8, you have 58 UAs. But what you're seeing is, that could be because the other battalion, your sister battalion, in deploying, drops those UAs to you. Because you look at, "Oh my God, 58 UAs in May." Then you go to June and there's one UA. So something's happening there. So what happens is you have to pass those records that, in the regiment, are moving from battalion to battalion as you're deploying, and maybe they need to be declared deserters, or they need to be processed, or they come back and get reassigned, but somebody administrates that. So the numbers can fool you, because they're being managed within the regiment. You have the legal cases that are dropped to you. You have the UAs that are dropped to you, and the process is that your sister-battalion rolls out. So you know, some of these may be dropped to us. Some of these we're going to drop to somebody else as we move on. One of my goals, and, again, it was maybe a sign of the times, is I wanted to make sure we took care of our own business and didn't drop others, but that's not always possible. So, you know, those kinds of things can skew the numbers. But, again, it was sort of a major era of transition, at that time. When I got there, in the 2d Marine Division, things were much better than I saw when I came back from Vietnam when I was there. I mean issues like racial issues and drugs,

the racial issues were basically resolved; we didn't have the kinds of tensions and everything that I saw coming out of Vietnam. The drug testing now, zero tolerance, is beginning to change those kinds of problems that you might have. The quality of leadership now being stabilized and improved, and like I said was because of the staff NCOs most significantly. You could see the impact as they were moving up. So if you took these kinds of statistics, and you took them from, say '71, the end of Vietnam, and you took them through, say '81, I think you would see a tremendous change. And then, in the '80s, of course, I really felt we'd arrived.

Allison: It didn't get much better than that.

Zinni: But it did. I can remember some young company commanders. When I was a regimental company commander, they would ask me about my previous tour at Okinawa when I commanded the guard unit. I remember them saying to me, "You know, sir, I can't even imagine that. I can't even imagine something like that would happen." I mean, thank God they couldn't imagine it. Here's someone who could not imagine that there would be these kinds of internal problems that we had. It was beyond his scope that that wouldn't happen that way. And, to me, that made me feel good, and again it was the Wilsons and Barrows, and Grays and Twomeys that brought these changes around.

Allison: Something that was occurring, while you were at the 2d Marine Division, in national affairs, the Iranian hostage crisis occurred. Do you remember anything? Did it affect things?

Zinni: Yes. What happened—we deployed in January to the Mediterranean. And in November, we went out to Twentynine Palms for our CAX. And we were to go

through our CAX and our tact test, then deploy, kind of the way you peaked into the training programs. While I'm out at Twentynine Palms, Colonel Turley said to me, "While you're out here, we're going to give you the brief." And I didn't know what he was talking about; I thought the brief had something to do with the CAX, and he said, "We won't bother you while your CAX is going on, but you'll get the brief while you're out here." And I had no clue; I asked my staff; they had no clue. They didn't know anything. So after our CAX was complete, we went through the hot wash and everything else, AAR [after action review], I was then ushered into a scif [secure compartmentalized information facility] out there. Nobody else in the battalion or the staff or anything [was] allowed in, just me, and I get this brief on the plan for the invasion of Iran. And obviously, being a forward deployed BLT now, my BLT will join the MEB and the ships and everything, the whole plan! Now, you have to remember, President Reagan was just elected in November.

Allison: Right.

Zinni: So I get told that, "You're the only one in the battalion that can know about this; you can't share it with anybody else, but be prepared at the time. And the reason we're telling you about this now, because this is a contingency that we're working on, and if the hostages are not released, this is going to be executed. And you are now going to receive all new weapons. So you'll know why, and no one else will." So I go back to Camp Lejeune, and suddenly all my mortars are replaced, all my machine guns are replaced for new weapons. Now I've got my executive officer, Ray Smith, and everybody kind of saying, "What's going on? Why are we getting all of these new weapons, new communications gear—why all of a sudden now, and just before we're

deploying?” “Just don’t worry about it,” you know. I gave them some excuse. So we’re getting ready to pull out of Morehead City, and, this is interesting, because I always fancied myself a trainer and an operator, and boy, I trained my battalion the best I can, and we’re really ready to go. Now, all of a sudden, when you’re faced with looking at this major combat, you’re looking at the forces really coming together and everything else. You’re starting to think, “Did I do a good enough job in training them? Did we train on the right things?” I mean here we are; the battalion is getting all sorts of kudos for the things they’ve done, including the CAX and everything else, but now you begin to really think, “Boy, maybe I should put more emphasis here. Did we do enough on this? Did we do enough live-fire? Did we do all that?” You really begin to face it, right in front of you; it puts a whole new perspective on training. And it just brought home the idea that all the training and everything you do has to be done in the light that you’re actually going to do something.

So when the moment comes, it looks like you’re actually going to do something. Obviously the battalion was more than ready, but as a battalion commander, you go through all those things in your head, in your mind. And we pull out of Morehead City, and I’m thinking, “God, we could be going into harm’s way. I’m the only one in the battalion that knows this.” And I think Ray Smith, because he’s pretty sharp, he sensed something was up, because I was now getting really into going through SOPs and orders, getting all this stuff ready *[laughter]*. And as we’re pulling out, the inauguration happened, and President Reagan came in, and I don’t know what messages were sent, either real or implied, but boom, the hostages are released.

Allison: All of a sudden the air’s . . .

Zinni: All of a sudden the fog clears, yes. So somehow I gotta believe, and I don't know what happened, but what was conveyed now with President Reagan coming in is that we would not tolerate the hostage situation, and something would happen, because all of a sudden there was this release.

Allison: So you guys were the tip of the spear, there.

Zinni: Well, we were, I mean obviously there were a lot of other forces that would come together. The other thing that got me, is that we sort of leaned back and said "Phew!" And then I was able to tell everybody, and of course everybody was kind of, "Oh, shucks." We're all Marines. You know Marines. Then we're pulling out, and we don't get more than a day or two out, and this situation happens down in Guyana or someplace in South America, and suddenly we get veered off and make a right turn and go down to Vieques [Puerto Rico], and we're told to do a rehearsal of our NEO plan. So we're now on Vieques Island rehearsing our NEO plan, with orders to be prepared to go into I think it was Guyana. General Twomey flies down there, too, because we're getting ready to do it. And, of course, that doesn't happen, and then we go up to Spain and do an exercise, and while we're there there's a coup. There's an attempted coup in the parliament in Spain. So things really go to hell. We get fired up over that. But the whole deployment was like that, then Beirut, just a whole series.

Allison: Yes, you were on standby for an NEO [noncombatant evacuation operation] for Beirut, Lebanon.

Zinni: Yes, for Lebanon, and we went from sort of an emergency to emergency in the deployment, nothing happened. Then exercises, too, that we did out there in training, and of course the Med is always decent with liberty for the troops. Sort of gets

everybody's adrenaline up, spirits up.

Allison: Which is really the beginning of the new way American foreign policy was starting to shape up, which has been ongoing ever since. That kind of thing, NEOs, humanitarian . . .

Zinni: Bob Johnston relieved me as commander of 2/8, and he went into Beirut, but the sort of leisurely deployment was no more. I mean, what we were beginning to see with all these pop-ups—you can go back at history and look at things that actually happened, but if you look at deployments before that, and you looked at the almost-happened, too, you were beginning to see, now, these things happening more often. One of the things in the back of my mind, and others that were in position, had we prepared the MEUs for the right things? I mean, basically, when you looked at the work-up of the MAUs then, not MEUs but MAUs, we did these amphibious landings like we were mini-MEFs or MEBs. We could do a beach assault, but we really didn't have the ability to project that kind of power onto a hostile beach. And the kinds of things we were facing out there were not these kinds of classical amphibious, conventional operations. And so, in the back of our mind, too, was becoming more and more this idea of whether the MEUs were being shaped and trained and prepared for the right kinds of missions, given the things we're facing or near-facing out there. So that seed was planted. Now later on, obviously, for other reasons, too, we were going to begin to rethink the MEUs, and that eventually led to MEU (SOC) [special operations capable].

Allison: Wasn't that General Gray's invention?

Zinni: The genesis of the idea came from [Bernard E.] Trainor, General Trainor. Not in the form of MEU (SOC), but there's a whole change that came about that we can talk

about in the future.

Allison: Sure.

Zinni: I mean I walked away from the 2d Marine Division—just a great time to be down there. Things were happening. The pace of operations, the intensity of things that went on, the diversity of the kinds of missions we were finding, the operational orientation, all the other things that were changing; the nature of the kinds of troops, the leadership changes, all those things. I mean it was a great time of transition. For the Marine Corps, 2d Marine Division, really being on the point of the spear at the time. So it was an exciting time to be down there, and it was tremendously, I think, enhancing for me, personally, the education and the experience of going through all this.

Allison: Any concluding thoughts on the 2d Marine Division before we talk about Command and Staff?

Zinni: I had this sense that I wanted to know the rest of the Marine Corps, too. I mean I would meet buddies that were from the West Coast, or WestPac. Obviously I had a tour of Okinawa by then, but in the back of my mind, the Marine Corps was oriented toward an East Coast Marine Corps or a West Coast Marine Corps, a WestPac Marine Corps, and people tended to stay there. You'd meet your buddies or others at Command and Staff College or AWS or one of these other places, or Headquarters Marine Corps, and you'd get these different perspectives, and it seemed like another world, another branch of the military. Many, many people were very comfortable with this; they liked this. This was kind of a homesteading mentality. I didn't. I really wanted to experience other things. I wanted to experience the 1st Marine Division—I did, obviously, in Vietnam, but at Camp Pendleton at Twentynine Palms, I wanted to

experience the 3d Marine Division at Okinawa, too. I mean I did a tour at 3d FSR and saw the division from a little distance. I wanted to have these other experiences. I wanted to know the Marine Corps, and that sort of flew in the face of the idea that, “Well, I’m an East Coast Marine” or “I’m a 2d Marine Division Marine” and that sort of thing. And I didn’t think that was healthy. And I think that that sort of—even rivalry, and mentality, was not good for the Marine Corps. And I wanted to break out of that, and I really wanted to get the other experiences, and when the opportunity came, later on, I did.

Allison: OK, sir. You had mentioned a desire to go back to Quantico into the teaching realm, and you got that opportunity.

Zinni: Yes. I would be going down to Command and Staff College, and I thought that was fantastic. I enjoyed my year there as a student. I really felt confident in my abilities to impart what I had learned, and I really wanted to be in the operational side, teaching those sorts of things. So I came to Command and Staff College. I was put in what was called Landing Force Operations then, which basically were the operational and tactical side of things. I came there at a time that Command and Staff College was undergoing a change. In the two years I was there, Colonel Jack Garcia came in as the director. He was given a mandate from the commandant, and now General Twomey comes up to command the Ed Center, to change the curriculum, to make it much more operationally oriented, much more oriented to the kinds of changes we were seeing in the world and the education process. There were different philosophies in the way to educate, so we were beginning to put in elective programs, redesign the curriculum. It was great teaching at this time, too, because you’re now getting people coming in with

these experiences. Now, we're at the beginning [of] the post-Vietnam era. We're hot and heavy in the maneuverist theory versus the attritionist theory. Others saw it as the more traditional and appropriate, and the other as the radicals. Quantico now has become a hotbed of this debate, and we have sort of the gurus of this firmly entrenched from the outside, the Bill Linds' and others. From the inside, Colonel Mike Wiley and a number of others are here. So I came to Command and Staff as an instructor, and teaching in this area, and brought this into the curriculum now, but this was not truly doctrinal or conceptual, but the Marine Corps is beginning to be open to it. So we had to bring it in as kind of an innovated "other" approach and blended it in there. The way we use MEUs and MEBs, I created a course at Command and Staff College on MEB/MEU operations and how this is going to be run. We had a series of electives. General Twomey wanted to make the electives very practical. I started one on training management, one on battalion command, and taking the lessons that I had from recent experience, and working these electives. We were trying to become much more grounded in (and this is General Twomey's sort of impact, too) the real world things, not a lot of theory, maybe get less of the strategic policy level; that's really War College stuff; more of the operational level. Maybe more useful to know super tactics, also, but that's really AWS, but from the tactical to the operational. And, of course, the bullpen at Command and Staff College had fantastically great people, J. J. Carroll, and a number of others that obviously knew their stuff, too, and a lot of people that I knew that were great officers. So the talent was there in the bullpen. And as we went through this change, it was wide open what we taught. I thought General Twomey had a concept that was interesting, and it never really took hold, and we never really

understood. I thought what he was trying to say should have been studied. He was never really satisfied, even with the changes in the curriculum. And one time since I knew him pretty well, I asked him, “What is it you’re trying to do? What is it that you find the education system’s not filling, in your mind.” And he said, “What I believe, is when you come to Command and Staff College, and you put a year into Command and Staff College, you should walk out, as a student, and say, ‘Phew, I just fought nine campaigns. In this year, I’ve fought nine campaigns.’” And he said, “What I mean by that is, we should take eight, or nine, or whatever the right number is of a campaign, like a campaign in Europe, a campaign in the Pacific, a campaign fighting an insurgency, a campaign doing these things, and around those campaigns, everything would be taught. In other words, if you were doing the campaign in Europe, you would be then studying military history from the European perspective. You would be studying your strategic lessons and all from understanding NATO commitment, and how all that works. So that would be dumped into the part of the course. It’s sort of like teaching around great books. You teach everything that you want in a broad education, but it’s done in the context of the books. This is in the context of the campaigns.” And he said, “The importance of the campaigns is, you know, you have experiences in life. You have real experiences. You walk away from battlefields that you actually fought on. You walk away from field exercises, from computer simulations. You walk away from these, saying ‘I fought a battle there.’ Now, I may have done it vicariously through a computer simulation, or I may have been in the field during a maneuver or CAX or something like that, or I may have had an actual experience, but you learn from those experiences. You see the patterns. You see the

trendsY you build up that bank of experiences.” He says, “What we have in Command and Staff College now, and it’s not only Command and Staff but all the schools here, is we go from class to class, exercise to exercise, whatever, we don’t have the coherence of campaign planning. And the coherence of campaign planning, we should be giving our officers campaign experience at this level. And it could be actual from historical perspectives; it can be vicarious through exercises or simulations. It can be through the academic institutions that tailor it that way.”

We never did that, because I don’t think people got it, but later on, when I would talk to—General [Paul] Van Riper, and I would talk about how people make decisions, how good decision makers and commanders can see trends in things—it’s because they have a bank of knowledge. They’ve seen this before. And where did they see it before. Well, they may have seen it on an actual battlefield. They may have seen it in an exercise. They may have seen it in some historical study they did of a campaign. And so I thought that was an intriguing and interesting approach, but we never did it. You build curricula around campaigns. Even gauging that cultural thing; we take everything that you get, everything from administration to logistics, but you would do it in a campaign context. And to me, it always stuck in my mind as an interesting idea that maybe would be a good approach.

Allison: They never went with it.

Zinni: No. I mean we did modify the curricula to a significant degree. Colonel Garcia, at the time, came up with a brilliant way, and I think modernized the course in many great ways, but it never got to that. The guy that interested me in figuring out how he had this sixth sense of a lot of things operational is Ray Smith. Ray Smith is probably one

of the most decorated Marines in my era, definitely.

Allison: There's a book out about him right now.

Zinni: Is there?

Allison: *Boys of '67*, have you seen that?

Zinni: I wrote the forward to it. The thing about Ray, that I've found, he had a tremendous sort of innate sixth sense about the battlefield, and I saw this all the time. When we were at the CAX one time, we were going to do this attack of a fortified position. And the plan called for the engineers to come up and make two breeches in the wire, then we would come through, with two companies, simultaneously into the breeches. The engineer platoon was really only organized to have two breaching teams. But we sort of jury-rigged a third breaching team and kept it in reserve. And so Ray was in the rear with the reserve; I'm up at the breach. We launch down into this, under air cover and fire and smoke. Engineers come up. Bangalores go into one breach. And the company comes through. The other breach fails. And, I mean, there's smoke and bombs and crap going on, but now I've got one company into the wire going through, the other company held up, which was dangerous, because they could get out-flanked. And I'm in my command AAV. I pick up the headset to call Ray to say, "Send up the other breaching team," and as I pick up the handset and get ready to key it, I hear him come on, and he says, "I know—you want the other breaching team. They're on their way." And I dropped the handset, literally, [and thought] is he a mind reader? And of course, the breaching team's there. We make the breach. Company goes through. They catch up. So after we get through this, I said to Ray, "How did you know?" He said, "I was listening for the Bangalore explosion." I said, "Bangalore?" I mean, there were 500-

pound bombs dropping, artillery, mortars; he could tell the difference, he knew enough that he had to hear two explosions. When he didn't hear it, he knew right away it was one of the breeches.

Recording stopped and resumes:

Allison: We would like to include you, Colonel Jerry Turley, on the recording.

Zinni: *[laughter]* Yes, sir, Colonel Jerry Turley has joined us here today. Good to have you, sir.

Turley: Thank you, sir.

Allison: We were talking about 3/2 back in 1978?

Turley: Seventy-eight?

Allison: What do you recall about that, sir?

Zinni: Well, he was saddled/burdened with Don Gardner and myself and . . . *[laughter]*

Turley: I also had that Reserve battalion.

Zinni: Yes, yes.

Turley: The regiment had four battalions, a Reserve battalion, and first, second, and third.

Zinni: And you had a tank battalion, too.

Turley: They came later. Of those four lieutenant colonels, all four of them made general.

Allison: That's amazing.

Turley: He had Frank Libutti in the 3d Battalion . . . but he got his battalion, you weren't even selected yet.

Zinni: Not even selected yet.

Turley: Yes. So it was a good move. By the way, Jim Conway was in the 3d Battalion.

Allison: That's right.

Zinni: That's right.

Allison: Had Company K.

Turley: Yes.

Allison: What do you remember of him, either one of you?

Zinni: I said to somebody when I was down there that Conway would someday be the Commandant.

Allison: You did?

Zinni: Yes, I mean, you know a young officer who stands out, I've probably said that about others.

Turley: Kind of like Bill Leftwich.

Allison: Just good leadership.

Zinni: We had a lot of good company commanders in the regiment at the time.

Turley: We really did. They had set that RLT up for someone else, and then General Bain McClintock, God bless his soul, said, "You're going to get the battalion." And, of course, my son was killed there, that month. And so they gave me the regiment while I was still a lieutenant colonel, which pissed off—excuse me, a lot of—and I was also a Reserve officer on active duty, and so, with all of that, and there were a lot of regular colonels there and were not competitive in any way for future assignments. They really opposed that but it came out okay.

Zinni: I was telling Fred how you designed that training program, that I think lasted something like nine months to get ready for [Operation] Northern Wedding/Bold Guard, the intensity of the training, that by the time we got to go to Northern

Wedding/Bold Guard, we just felt we could execute all those missions, as complex as they were.

Turley: I hope I'm not interrupting.

Allison: No, sir. You're not.

Turley: We're in the same position today. What we had was the traditional sense that Marines don't do Army things. What General Gray said was (with the support of General Barrow) and General McClintock, we're going to a mechanized operation. And I didn't know how to spell mechanized at that point. And so, I sent the guy scampering to him down at the Army school and a few others, and we literally sat down, and with the amphibious tractor and a few tanks and some trucks, began to evolve how the Marine Corps could play in a mechanized mode. Just to move from 2.5 miles an hour to 10 miles an hour is an unbelievable mental, intellectual leap that is hard for traditionalists to understand. And, yes, we did that. We had an old T-54 tank out there with air on it, trying to think about anti-mech and so forth. It was the beginning of it, and after we finished a year's training with General Gray as the brigade commander, and he came back here to the Development Center, and then he started putting it in his operational handbook. I still had my little green book that we put out. What we discovered was, if you want them to move, you've got to give every squad leader something you have. So we had a little book, about twice as long as your little recorder. And they could stick it in their back pocket, and they did, and we had all sorts of arm and hand signals. You know, to a tanker, this means "close up—close your hatches," to an Amtrac-er it means he's scratching his hip, to an infantryman, "what the hell's he doing?" So you had to go back to the very, very basic steps of walking before you

could run.

Zinni: You know, the other thing that impressed me was how you took the minimal maneuver space at Camp Lejeune and designed a way to move to the speeds and the distances that you need to do in that very limited [area].

Turley: I discovered the environmentalists were everywhere.

Allison: Even at that time.

Turley: Oh, yes, except on Saturdays and Sundays *[laughter]*. So we would go the field on Friday, do our map exercises, and then there was that huge training area right in the middle. Then we would run exercises around the training area. You could get about 50 miles in at Camp Lejeune and never have to press your luck. But we always went on Friday afternoons, and operate from Saturday and Sunday and morning till noon, bring 'em home and let the troops go on liberty. They loved that, to go on liberty in the middle of the week. But if you knocked a tree down, I mean, you had to stop until the environmentalists came out and literally roast you with those tickets. So nobody ever bothered me about that *[laughter]* woodpecker.

Zinni: But, you know, I was saying about how complex it was, because we had the amphibious piece, in which 17 amphibious ships, it was no small feat, and landing, in the Northern Wedding phase, then to roll into the heliborne assault and mechanized phases into Bold Guard. You've got to do a tremendous set of complex—and at large scale, a scale that the Marine Corps really hadn't operated in for quite a while.

Turley: I would say that Gray established the mechanized process for the Marine Corps.

Allison: Out of this evolution? Out of that 4th MAB deal?

Turley: Oh, yes, yes. When he came back, he wrote his little operational handbooks at the

Development Center. He kind of copied our book. So, he made a contribution. He took the Marine Corps from five miles per hour, almost colonial infantry, World War II structure, and put us in the mechanized world, where we were able to reach out and do asymmetrical warfare.

And my reward for that, I don't know if you knew this or not. My reward was they sent a C-12 down for me after the exercise; we were very successful. The Army Lieutenant General Sherman said to General Gray, "You're different. You do mechanized ops; we've never had any Marines over here do that." A great compliment, a year's effort. We come back; had the regiment for two years, the C-12 airplane waiting for me to see the Commandant, and I said to Bunny, "Bunny, we're going to Paris. The Commandant wants to see me. So we're going to Paris." I got to see General Barrow, *[mimics General Barrow's southern accent]*: "Y'all come right in and you sit down. I got a special job for you." He said, "I'm sending y'all to Twentynine Palms." *[laughter]* And I said, "Oh s——t, sir. What did I do wrong?" He said, "No, you're the guy that's going to go and change the CAX programs." What Gray did, we then went out to Twentynine Palms. Then was—setting up on your tank there one day . . .

Zinni: Teaching me still out there; mentoring me when I went out there. Brought me hot coffee and soup, would whisper in my ear these little gems and nuggets that . . .

Turley: You're the first one that goes through the Russian tanks. With his battalion, when he took over 2/8, we put in the northern area around the middle of the base, about day three, or day two. The battalion has to maneuver through a Russian strong point. It had barbed wire. It had 200 silhouette targets. It had bunkers. It had everything. He had to

use Bangalore torpedoes. He had to do it. So it was really a test, and then there are two live companies, side by side, shooting, and I tell you it's hairy. It really is hairy. No one could get through it. So Glasgow said, "Ah, we're going to have to stop that." Brought that back, and here comes Tony, and I crawled out with my little green thermos that I only shared with the battalion commanders, and he said, "I don't drink much coffee," and I said, "Well let's have a little." And as he's drinking, I'm listening to his radio's sound. And his radio, if they're running into problems, the volume goes up and the dialogue is fast in pace. It was steady. Tell me he's doing just what he wanted to do. That was my sneaky reason. So we had a cup of coffee, and I said, "Good luck, sir." The Commandant was out that day.

Allison: General Barrow?

Turley: Yes. And he went right straight through the thing; it was beautifully done.

Zinni: Do you remember, about the brief out here about Iran and the hostages. When you called me in and told me we were headed into the Mediterranean, and you said, "You're the only one in the battalion can know this," and you told me about the plan for Iran and my eyes got this big!

Turley: What they used to do is—they landed right on the parade field. People would say, you know, "You're running operations here." I ran the base ops tent at the CAX then. I said, "I didn't hear anything last night; I didn't hear a thing." S——t, there were

helicopters all over up there. [Charles] Pitman and [Ron] Beckwith, all of those guys were up there with me.

Allison: That was for the hostage rescue, that Desert One deal?

Zinni: Yes. And then, obviously, when President Reagan came in, intending to do something if those hostages weren't released.

Turley: And so, what we really did was, in a period of three years, transitioned the Marine Corps from standard operations over to mechanized ops. When I left the 2d Marine Regiment, the new regimental commander, to show you how traditionally minded they were, got together with all the staff, and said, "Okay. We're no longer going to do that Army stuff; we're going back to being Marines and doing amphibious operations." And so they threw it all out the window and went right back to being—and by the way, he only stayed about seven months. So that was the problem throughout the Marine Corps. Those who were on the West Coast said, "Those guys are doing mechanized ops. They're crazy." At Lejeune there was great opposition to it. Even within your regiment there was. And so it's hard to change.

So here we are today, anyway. By the way, Gray wrote a paper, on seapower; reduction of seapower. Tony, I've got to send it to you. He wrote it in 1989, he said, "In 20 years, we're going to be fighting terrorism and insurgency. And we can't reduce the seapower of this nation." It's just so perfect. It's amazing; it's more valid today, with his prophecy there than it was during—I gave it to the Commandant. I have been writing a biography about Gray. And that's overdue. It's getting along pretty good, but we need to do something for him.

Zinni: Thank God you're doing it.

Turley: I just had that part on there about the "bubbas" and that pissed him off.

Zinni: *[laughter]*

Allison: Bubbas? Who are the bubbas?

Turley: He had a conglomeration of guys, none of them were competitive, but they all knew Gray, and this was new to Headquarters Marine Corps, but wherever Grey went, there was always a following. He had this little entourage that would follow along. Wherever, Okinawa, or wherever it was, guys would come up who were less than perfect Marine officers, and probably not promotable. But they tagged onto Gray. And so here he comes to Headquarters Marine Corps, and he says to all of them, "Come and see me." S——t they'd walk into the Commandant's office and say, "I'm here to see General Gray. He wants to see me." "Who are you?" Whatever his name is, from colonel to captain, even retired. One day, the Assistant Commandant, Tom Morgan—I love Tom Morgan—said, "Jerry, who in the hell are these people?" "I don't know." He said, "What are they talking about?" He said, "I don't know, Gray didn't tell me." But that's Gray, very compartmented, you do this, and don't need to know this, and so forth. So he's very compartmented in his head.

But, ended up with it pissed him off, kind of a love-hate relationship. But Friday night, his paper was being lauded by everyone. So he was in a good mood. Gray, in this archive, has 250-some boxes of papers. I've been through almost 200.

Zinni: Wow.

Turley: And in those boxes, there's anywhere between one and 20 folders, little file folders. And in there I've found probably five papers that were timeless. I will send you that one right away. I'd better get out of your hair; you guys are . . .

Allison: I had a question. At this time, when you're talking at Twentynine Palms when you were down there, early '80s, had the Marine Corps brought in the LAVs, the LARs?

Turley: The LAVs arrived about a month after I went out there. As a matter of fact, I pulled up

to the headquarters, and there sit four strange-looking vehicles. Two of them with three wheels, six wheels, two of them with eight wheels.

Zinni: Wasn't there a track in . . .

Turley: No track. Never a track. But they were the Canadians, and so they showed up, and I went in to see General Glasgow, he said, "Get in here!" Glasgow said, "General Gray's here," and I'm, "Ah, s——t, I just got rid of him." So he said, "Let's go for a drive." I said, "Sir, I'm kind of busy." "Yes, we'll go for a drive." So we got into the six-wheeled. We got into the eight-wheeled, and away we go. And he's chewing tobacco the whole time. He's got brand-new Marines that are assigned for him, and he's chewing tobacco, spitting over the side. No kidding. And we drove all over the base, all over the base. Six or seven hours, just driving this thing. "Do you like this one?" and "What's better?" and down through the crevices and the wide open, and I put in the book that the tire trails were—a trail of tires was seen throughout the area, mixed with the splash of chewing tobacco. Marking his territory. He didn't make commandant on his driving skills.

So, what we get, with General Gray, as he now moves to different positions, we still have Marine East Coast mechanized. The West Coast is not playing, and certainly Okinawa cannot play in. So when Gray becomes the Commandant, even though we're running the CAX program, the east coast always did it better than the West Coast, because they prepared, and they had an attitude, "We're going to do mechanized ops." The West Coast was a year behind. "We gotta do this things with the LVTs," and they didn't look at it as a mechanized—you know, maneuverability. It took a year to clean that out. And I would say that your CAX did more to help me than you ever knew

about it. They helped me move mechanized operations, because the Commandant was there, aviation—everybody was setting up on that hill. Matter of fact some frags landed pretty close to Barrow and he wasn't too impressed.

Zinni: And we had the Chinese generals that came out, and [Senators] [Pete] McCloskey and Sam Nunn, I remember, too.

Turley: Yes. We were making history for the Marine Corps. So when Al Gray becomes Commandant, he does two things. He continues with mechanized operations, but then he says, "The world is changing." He says reduction of seapower, where he says we're going to be fighting terrorists and insurgencies, not mass conventional forces. That was 1989, in this paper to the SecNav [secretary of the Navy]. I'll give you a copy of that. And so he ships us over to SOLIC [special operations] and low-intensity combat, and small littoral wars, and in doing that, again we have great opposition. Because we didn't sell it right. We said we were going to do this, and [Patrick G.] "Paddy" Collins, some great Marines came by, and they called it, "We're going to become British Commandos." That's the last thing. So everybody shut down, and we're very strong, passively strong; you don't take on Gray head on, face to face, unless you really have all of your ducks lined up. And so they went along with it. Not as well as they could have, but he was right in what he did.

Allison: Sir, the—how there were the East Coast Marines and West Coast Marines, Okinawa Marines, Hawaii Marines, and how you—people liked it that way, but you saw, you were saying to me, the danger in that.

Turley: I'm really proud of what you're doing. Keep it going.

End of Session V

UNITED STATES MARINE CORPS HISTORY DIVISION
Oral History Interview

Interviewee: General Anthony C. Zinni

Date: 25 June 2007

Length: 02:07:50

Interviewer: Dr. Fred Allison

SESSION VI

Allison: This is an oral history interview with General Anthony Zinni, and today's date is the 25th of June 2007, and we're doing the interview, again, at Breckinridge Hall at Command and Staff. The interview is done by Fred Allison. Okay, sir, we were talking the last time about your time as an instructor at Command and Staff, and I guess we had finished up on that. After that, what were you thinking you'd like to do?

Zinni: Well, I desired to go to a war college. I mean, that was kind of the next thing in line and obviously there was a selection board for the war college and I was up and eligible, and I was selected. I didn't have any particular war college in mind. The National War College would be most convenient, but I thought Army was good, too. In those days, obviously, we didn't have MCWAR [Marine Corps War College] or anything like that. So I was selected for the National War College, which made it convenient, familywise, since I was living here. And, actually, another member, Colonel [Dave Martin], who was a good personal friend and also an instructor at Command and Staff College, was selected. So we ended up going together, living here, actually, living in the same-lettered apartments here at Quantico.

Allison: Here on base?

Zinni: Yes, here on base. Most every place I lived on base here, like about a dozen of them, are all gone now. But we . . .

Allison: Those were the days of the nice housing [*sarcastically said*].

Zinni: Yes. They weren't bad. I mean for the times and everything. We always enjoyed Quantico, and it always seemed like I came back to Quantico. So we were off to National War College, which I really enjoyed. I really liked the War College. I think it did several things. One, it sort of ratcheted up my education in terms of things at the policy and strategy level, as you would expect from a war college. Because National is much more integrated than the other war colleges, as it is, in no particular, service orientation, was much more balanced, not only in the services—in the military services—but also in the civilian side, the government side. So we had State Department, CIA, Department of Energy. So in that respect it was much, I think, more broadly structured in the student body and in education. So I enjoyed it and I was really into the school. I always liked going to school and always absorbed everything that they tried to pass on, but I really felt it was taking me to a different level. It was taking me now to a level of thinking and a level of awareness about interagency and the government and the way things were done. Especially since National War College is in Washington, we had access to great speakers. We had Richard Nixon come and Henry Kissinger. So it was phenomenal in terms of what we were exposed to. I was told about halfway through the course, or less than that, that I would be going to Headquarters Marine Corps and I would be going to Plans and be at the NATO desk. So I oriented my electives to Europe and NATO, because they had an elective system. And I took a trip to NATO, to Europe, and obviously they have trips designed to

different commands. Usually, you can apply for those and get accepted based on that priority if you're going to be assigned there. So I prepared for that, but that was not in the cards. I got a call, my old battalion commander, [Bernard] Trainor—Lieutenant Colonel Trainor, now Lieutenant General Trainor—was director of Plans, Policies and Operations, PP&O, and Headquarters Marine Corps, and I got a call right before graduation that I would be going to Headquarters Marine Corps and become the Marine Corps' Special Operations Terrorism Counteraction Officer. They had just formed a new section. This was in response to the Beirut bombing, which occurred while I was at the National War College.

Allison: How did that affect anything at the National War College?

Zinni: I think the National War College in many ways was prescient. Remember, this is the early '80s, but they had some tremendous courses and electives on terrorism, insurgency, and that sort of thing. A very renowned author and professor there, Bard O'Neill, a former Air Force officer that really became an expert in this area, an expert early on, taught many of them. And then I thought I'd miss an opportunity here. So I tried to—in the last few months I was there, although I couldn't take the electives, to try to gather as much information as I could, because, basically, I was going into this cold. I mean, I really hadn't focused on that area. Like I said, I was sort of oriented now toward NATO because I thought that was going to be my job. And, obviously, before that at Camp Lejeune and the major exercises—Northern Wedding, Bold Guard—I had this orientation back to Europe and NATO. I mean I was peripherally aware of what was going on. If you remember back in those days, the European terrorists were a big deal—Red Brigade, Baader-Meinhof Gang—and, also, it really

wasn't the kind of terrorism as we think about it now. And the study of insurgency after Vietnam wasn't too popular. And the whole business now with special operations, ever since Desert One, the attempt to rescue the Iranian hostages, there was this rise in creating special operations forces. The Marine Corps had elected not to participate in that, but still there were joint issues that were involved. But I had no real sense of all that. So I was going in cold to this job at Headquarters Marine Corps.

Allison: That's interesting. Was it the fact that we would not get involved in an insurgency kind of thing, like a Vietnam thing? We're going to stay out of that sort of thing?

Zinni: Yes, I think the mood certainly was, coming out of Vietnam, that we put that aside. We were focused on Europe and the Soviet threat. There wasn't much interest in that sort of thing.

Allison: We're just not going to do that again.

Zinni: Yes, and so when I got to Headquarters Marine Corps, of course, the whole focus was on protecting Marines against terrorist attacks. Again, the Beirut bombing had brought this out, and now intelligence was coming in that Marines were being targeted, Marine security guards at embassies. And actually the Marines were now a higher-target priority for terrorists than even the ambassadors or senior officials. I mean, based on the intelligence we were getting. We were particularly focused on terrorism counteraction measures, which are more defensive. We really started to look at our base security, both in CONUS and overseas. We started to look at terrorism awareness and training our people to be much more aware and alert. We looked at high-priority units, like Marine Security Guard, Marine Barracks, where they might have deployed units. And so I had several missions. The priority mission was developing a Marine

Corps antiterrorism program, making sure our physical security, our intelligence, our troop awareness. So there had been some basic work done, and I was to bring this program into fruition and to launch it. There were 14 points to this program, or parts, that we had developed, and it was just a two-man section. But, in addition to this, I picked up another mission—because there was no place to put it in Headquarters Marine Corps—now we had the rise in special operations. A memo had come out from the deputy secretary of defense back in the early '80s that ordered all services to identify special operations capabilities that could be provided. The Marine Corps elected not to even participate. They ignored the memo. Obviously, the Army, Navy, and Air Force did. There were complaints that these programs in the services were uneven and that they were trying to figure out how to bring them up on equal par, and they were wrestling with this. They had created the Joint Special Operations Agency—it didn't have any command authority—to sort of coordinate budgets and meet priorities. Actually, a Marine major general, I can't remember his name, was put in charge. I think they put a Marine in charge because they had no dog to fight.

I was the joint officer for this, so I had to come up to speed on special operations, so I had to get educated on all this. I had to go around to the different services. I went down to JSOC. I went through the program, and I had to come up to speed on all the issues on special operations. So in addition to the terrorism business, I had all this special operations stuff that I had to come up to speed on, the capabilities and everything, since I had to represent the Marine Corps and General Trainor and the Commandant when they went into the “tank,” because they had to vote on these things. The third part of the job was low-intensity conflict. The whole business of low-

intensity conflict, like I said, had been pushed aside and it was a mixed bag. It was everything from counterinsurgency to rear area security operations. I mean there were all kinds of strange bags. All this was stuffed in my section—special operations, low-intensity conflict, and everything to do with terrorism all packed into that.

Allison: Into a two-man office.

Zinni: Into a two-man office. I had a naval flight officer, an NFO major that was a . . .

Allison: Must have been a smart guy.

Zinni: He was a good guy—and of course you had to get read into all these programs because they were highly classified. So I spent two years doing that and at the end of the two years we had put out the terrorism awareness program. We had done the assessments and the evaluations on physical security, had to come up to speed on all that. We gathered up all the programs that dealt with security related to any kind of terrorist attack and everything and put it under one roof. We moved MSG, Marine Security Guard, from under Manpower to PP&O, and that was sort of traumatic in many ways. I had to do the work and to liaison with the State Department on MSG issues and security issues. The State Department was looking to us, actually, for some of their security concerns. Had to get into this whole area of special operations and really get into the fine details of it. Spent a lot of time at Fort Bragg and other places and coming up to speed with that. So that consumed my time at Headquarters Marine Corps, and then I got promoted, selected for colonel, and my boss was General [Paul E.] Godfrey in ops. That's who I was under. And General Godfrey came to me when I got promoted. I wasn't sure what was going to happen when I got selected, and he said he wanted to form a different organization in ops, and he'd been thinking about this for a

long time and now that I'd been promoted he wanted to move me into this new organization. And the new organization would be in charge of emerging programs and concepts. And so what he wanted is to have an organization that we call MAGTF Concepts and Capabilities branch, and all the new emerging kinds of programs, concepts. Everything we were doing I would be in charge of. So we formed it and I inherited MPS that we were forming up at the time and manning. And General [Gene] Deegan before me—it was Colonel Deegan before that—had started that and really did a lot of great work, but passed it to where we were. We did work with DCS Aviation on the JVX, to be the Osprey, MV-22.

Allison: This is sort of the genesis of that.

Zinni: Yes, the genesis of that. We were relooking at amphibious ship capabilities, redesign, looking at the ship-to-shore movement. So anything to do with emerging concepts or emerging programs came into that section, so it was pretty interesting. It was kind of cutting-edge stuff. We really didn't have Quantico at the time into what it is now, the requirements and concept development. That was being done at Headquarters Marine Corps. It was this little section I had of about—maybe about five or six people that General Godfrey had created that brought this all together. And any kind of question about future operations, operational issues programs, had come to us, so that was pretty interesting work. Then I got hit with something really unusual. I got called in by General Trainor and he said, "This is very close hold." There was an emerging threat to our embassy and people in I believe Guyana, and they were looking at options for a NEO . . .

Allison: In South America.

Zinni: In South America. And one of the options that had come up was that now there were these arguments about what missions were SOF [Special Operations Forces], that SOF forces were claiming NEO [non-combatant evacuation operation] and other things, and the Marine Corps was saying, wait a minute, no, that's not a SOF mission. We do NEOs and all this other—there was some tension back and forth in the joint arena on the definition of SOF by missions as opposed to by forces. And in working out the potential courses of action for this NEO, they came on this one where they would put SOF helicopters and rangers aboard amphib ships to do the NEO. Well, that sent the Marine Corps into high hover. So, as a result, it never materialized, and it wasn't one of the priority options, but it now generated, as you can imagine, some serious discussion at Headquarters Marine Corps. So when General Trainor called me in and he said, "And this is very close hold." To me and another colonel from requirements, (Casey Roberts), he said, "You two are going to do a study, and it has to be held really tight. We're going to relook at the memo that was issued from the deputy secretary of defense back in the early '80s requiring all the services to pony up SOF forces." And he said, "Your mission is open-minded. Take a look at this. The question is "should the Marine Corps have special operations forces?"

Allison: Reconsider it.

Zinni: Reconsider it and wanted to keep it deadly quiet. There was another thing that happened, too, at the same time. Again, the argument and the debate over whether the Air Force, the Navy, and the Army were giving enough priority to SOF development of equipment, materiel, weapons systems, forces. There was always this debate, and when I was an action officer, I was a special operations officer, I would go over and

we'd get involved in these debates. There was argument from Congress and everywhere else that some of the services were not funding it properly. And so now there were rumblings about creating a separate special operations command. A letter came over to the commandant of the Marine Corps which then I was ushered in to see General [P. X.] Kelley, who was the Commandant, by General Trainor, and he handed me a copy of the letter. The name was cut off at the bottom. It was from Congress. I suspected it was Newt Gingrich.

Allison: He was a young guy at that time, wasn't he?

Zinni: But it said there were members in Congress that felt special operations were not getting its due by the services. The Joint Special Operations Agency didn't have command lines and budget lines. We needed to get some organization to grab command. The proposal that these congressmen were thinking about is all SOF would come under the Marine Corps. In other words, the Air Force SOF, the Army SOF, the Navy SEALs, would all now come under the Marine Corps to command. Now, their logic in the letter was the Marine Corps air-ground and logistics can do it all. The Marine Corps is the logical place to put this all together. It could give it focus. It could give it command authority. So they would all now [to] come under the Marine Corps. So General Kelley showed me this and he said, "Take a look at this. Whether we do it or not or this is [outlined], but we owe an honest answer." So part of the study now was should the Marine Corps develop SOF forces, go back to the DepSecDef memo? And the second is respond to this letter, which was pretty pointed, that says if there has to be a command authority over all SOF forces, why not the Marine Corps? It's

logically the most credible organization and the one that—first of all, we didn't have a dog in the fight, but we covered all the ground, logistics, aviation and all that.

Allison: Combined arms, all of it.

Zinni: So I got peeled off from my job and we began to do this study. So we did the first part of the study, and we actually did it down here at Quantico. We did a historical search, because we went back to the Raider battalions and the history and all that, and we looked at the history of the Marine Corps in sort of special operations. The Marine Corps had defined special operations differently early on. They'd defined it as environmental, like jungle, mountain, desert warfare and riverine and other things. They hadn't defined it the way it was defined currently. We had ignored the memo. There was a strong sense in the Marine Corps that you don't create—the raider battalions, when they were disbanded, there was a strong statement that said we'll never do that again. Marines are our elite. You don't put elites within elites, and it was sort of a tenet of the Marine Corps. So, basically, what we said to answer the first part was, there's a strong sense that you should not have special operations units within the Marine Corps. However, if we felt it necessary, what we recommended in the first part of the study was creating a special operations Marine expeditionary unit, one on each coast. That would be SOF. Now, SOF has all sorts of implications, obviously. When you create SOF, then you really don't have control over them. They've got to enter a different system. It isn't just saying they're SOF. So we put that proposal out. It went up and got chewed on by the hierarchy up there and they were real happy with it. General Kelley was not unhappy with what we had done. We had actually laid out and described a SOF MEU [Marine expeditionary unit] and what it would look like and

everything else, how we would man it, and we did the whole study. But we brought up all the problems it could cause in the Marine Corps and everything else and the history and all that. And, at the same time, when we proposed an answer to the congressmen, it was if there had to be a command and it had to be a service, it logically should be the Marine Corps. However, we said, if you do that, it will bring the animosity of the other services and they'll fight it. In the long run, it would be damaging to the Marine Corps, I think, in the bitter disputes that would follow, and everything else was in our interest—but you could not argue with the logic of the Marine Corps. That's how we proposed the answer. That one sort of went away. The issue of creating the SOF brought up another point. We were looking at our MEUs now because of the NEO thing, and I'd been a BLT commander in an MEU, and our feeling was our MEUs' training were out of date. We made our MEUs train like they were mini-MEFs. They did the landings and all this stuff.

Allison: Right.

Zinni: And we looked at the kinds of missions—operational, real world—our MEUs were having. We weren't training toward the most probable missions. We weren't becoming specialized. Our MEUs did very conventional training and so we put in a piece about the MEUs needed to be tuned up one way or the other.

Allison: More directed toward special operations?

Zinni: Well, directed toward specializing into missions they were facing out there, like NEO and other things. We didn't really say that—again, neither create the special operations mission—but at a minimum, relook at the training of the MEUs. So then the Commandant decided, if we were to make a decision at Headquarters Marine

Corps—this was General Kelley and General Trainor—and we were to impose it on the operational forces, now the FMFs, it would meet resistance. So anything we did should not be done in the isolation of Headquarters Marine Corps or at Quantico. What we should do is incorporate the FMF into the study, or, better yet, let them restart the study and we will participate, but let the FMF take the lead. So the decision was made that we would do it in II MEF. We would look at this issue, pretend like the first study wasn't done. General [Al] Gray was Marine Forces LANT, FMF. So they decided General Gray would get the mission. So I went down to see General Gray at FMFLANT. I told him, delivered the mail, and formed the study group under Colonel [Gordon W.] Keiser down at Camp Lejeune.

Allison: [Gordie Kaiser] was—was he on his staff?

Zinni: I think he was. Yes, he was on the staff. Sean Del Grosso was on the study. [Patrick G.] “Paddy” Collins was at Quantico, went down there. I was on the study group from Headquarters Marine, of course. So they formed the study group and they went through this for a long time. All sorts of recommendations were coming out, and nothing seemed to fit the bill.

Allison: Did you tell them that you'd already done a study on it, that Headquarters Marine Corps had done a study on it already?

Zinni: Yes, but we played it down, because we didn't want to say this is the [inaudible] or anything like that. We definitely did not want them to be influenced by that. The study group made a proposal and gave it to General Gray. He wasn't happy with it—and I think the struggle was always do you really want to create these kind of elite units within elite units, and how do we do this? And, of course, the underlying thing was,

“Were our MEUs really up to speed?” I mean we had what had happened in Beirut. We were looking at the missions and everything else. So General Gray was pretty tuned into looking at the MEUs, relooking the MEUs, training and development. So then General Gray, on his own, comes up with the idea of MEUSOC.

Allison: Did he really?

Zinni: Yes. So he comes up with the idea, instead of it being straight conventional or go special ops, and again, looking at this training improvement needed for the MEUs, he said, “Why don’t we tool up the MEUs, gear them up, get them training, highly specialized and if these missions are going to be called special operations missions, then we will just say, because of the way we trained our MEUs and we did everything else, although they remain conventional forces, they’re capable of these so-called special operations missions,” so MEUSOC. We would do our own certification program. We would develop it. We would have an SOTG, a special operations training group, and we would build all this. So the proposal came up to Headquarters Marine Corps. We took it in, and it was just a broad concept and it was mulled over with kind of, “Hmm, I don’t know. I don’t know.” Then, General Kelley decided, yes, let’s do it. So the first—he tasked MarForLant, then FMFLant, to develop the first concept and the first MEU. There was kicking around that I would go down and get the first MEU for a while, but then that got—unfortunately, they wouldn’t let me do that.

Allison: You were wanting to do it, though?

Zinni: Yes, but the whole business of maybe Headquarters Marine Corps too much influence. At the meantime, we were getting a lot of resistance from FMFPAC. They did not like the idea. They were fighting it.

Allison: Why is that?

Zinni: It was an East Coast thing. So we had stalled the program, and of course the first one, like anything you're ginning up, were kind of slow and it would—improvement. The commandant then ordered [MARFOR]—FMFPAC. I had to go out to PAC to sort of introduce the program, a lot of resistance out there.

Allison: Who headed PAC?

Zinni: D'Wayne Gray.

Allison: Gray.

Zinni: Yes, Gray and Gray. And I don't think so much that he was opposed to it. I think he may have had doubts personally about it and all, but there were iron colonels under him that—a lot of resistance. I mean, brutalized me when I went out there. Basically, I had to say, "This is from the commandant of the Marine Corps. You will do it," and—not happy, and they saw me as the messenger. So the program started up and began and of course everybody knows what MEUSOC became. It got stronger. The SOTGs were put in place, and I was involved in a lot of the looking at where we go to get the training, who we get to get help on this. I went down to JSOC and the Rangers and picked up a lot of information, and the other services were very helpful on all this, I've got to say. And everybody that were looking at this . . .

Allison: They didn't sense any sort of competition from the Marines?

Zinni: No, as a matter of fact, they saw this as a compliment. I think they would have liked to have seen the MEUSOCs become what's known in the special operations business as tier-two forces, like the rangers are, go through some certification. Because, like, when you employ JSOC or things like that, JSOC's highly specialized, and they need what—the short term, is sort of like the outer perimeter, forces that have enough training and expertise and everything and can do the kinds of things that—if they have to go in and rescue a hostage and do direct action, they could seal off the objective, could support them and all that stuff. So I think the feeling with everybody is MEUSOC looked like something that could step up and be a tier two. Now, the Marine Corps was resistant on any outside certification, unfortunately. I thought that was a mistake. I thought we should do that, because I thought it could contribute. This way, we have the best of both worlds, but the Marine Corps didn't want to go that way. But the MEUSOCs were, I thought, well-received and respected. If nothing else, finally, the MEUs were getting trained, and we identified in the study 23 missions that the MEUs needed to do, I mean, from NEOs to takedown of oil and gas platforms, all sorts of direct action missions, in extremis, hostage rescue. We did these 23 missions based on a pretty exhaustive study. I mean, you could argue maybe a few of those missions, but basically I think those were core missions that the time and the situation and the current environment and the past experience with the MEUs validated those. So the training then got focused on those. So I thought, in the end, this was a great solution to the problem. And so I completed that, and I came back at Headquarters Marine Corps after all this. I mean this whole thing was probably over the course of almost a year. And I got called in and said that the Navy—the CNO had this CNO's

Strategy Studies Group, SSG, at Newport, and in those days, there were six Navy O6s and three Marines. The Marine Corps would always pretty much assign students at Newport, at the Naval War College, and have them stick around for another year to be part of that.

Allison: So this group had been going on a while.

Zinni: It had been going on. My group was six, so there had been five years of it. Admiral Trost, who was the CNO, had complained that in the Navy scheme of things, the officers assigned there were the best they could predict as future admirals, and he was all over the Marine Corps, because, I mean, we don't do that, and we had good colonels on there, all from War College.

Allison: But it was just somebody that happened to be hanging around.

Zinni: Well, these were good guys, but I think there was a lot of pressure then to identify others and to at least make it look like it's not just a guy at Newport hanging around for the convenience. So General Kelley decided, well, he would assign some people from outside, so we always had a ground officer, air officer, and a logistician.

Allison: Right, right.

Zinni: So there was a logistician up at Newport that was there, and myself and an aviator were assigned from outside.

Allison: Puckett.

Zinni: Puckett was the logistician and Randy Brinkley.

Allison: Randy Brinkley, right.

Zinni: And so I got a call saying the Commandant has decided you're going to Newport, so off I go to Newport. And now I wasn't sure what I'd do after Newport or where I

would go, because I was hoping to go back to Fleet Marine Force and lobbying for that with the monitor. So I didn't want to move my family up there for a year and then back here, and the Strategic Studies Group in those days was constantly on the road, spent a lot of time in Washington. So I decided to geo-bachelor it up there and my family stayed here at Quantico, and actually I saw as much of them here, because we spent about half our time in Washington, most of the rest of the time traveling around. And it was great. Of the six Navy officers in there, five went on to become admirals, who I knew later on. Denny Blair and a number of others, Skip Bowman, and so I made—just like in the War College, I made friends of people who'd be future chiefs of staff of the Air Force and future combatant commanders and vice chairmen.

Allison: Like, who was the future . . .

Zinni: Like Joe Ralston and Mike Ryan and a number of senior Army officers. So the connections with the other services were great, and here on the Navy side, too.

Allison: Which really paid dividends later in your career.

Zinni: We had an unbelievable tasking by Admiral Trost. The maritime strategy had been out for a while. He wanted to relook at the maritime strategy. He wanted to know if the Soviets were reacting to the maritime strategy in any way, what they were doing. So we were read into all of the intelligence programs with the most sensitive and classified of Soviet material. He wanted us to look at total Navy capabilities and we were read into all the black programs on the submarines and everything. I mean, it caused a furor to get us into these programs, and he had to push for it. So we relooked at the maritime strategy. We were now reading the Soviets' reaction to it and Marshal Ogarkov, the Western TVD commander. We interviewed Soviet defectors at a senior

level. We traveled all over, and then we came back with what the Soviets had done to react to it and how we felt that maritime strategy ought to be relooked and retuned. Part of it was how we project power from the flanks, so we were looking at the carriers up in the fjords and Norway, landing the MEFs on the flanks and how the MEFs could contribute, establishing Marine Corps airbases ashore where you could bring attacks on the flanks. And we were seeing deep concern by the Soviets about the flanks. Marshal Ogarkov was now changing units over to be more naval infantry. He saw early seizure of Norway and GIUK gap and some of these places as critical because of the vulnerability. So we were looking at counter things to do with subs and everything else, carriers, projection of Marine forces, establishing airbases for strikes, so we could go deep on the flanks. So it was a great experience, just the whole business there.

Allison: It must have been really kind of a heady experience to be privy to that kind of information.

Zinni: Well, it was, and it gave me tremendous insights into the Soviets and into the way things were going, and actually the first inclination as to how vulnerable the Soviets were, especially talking to some of the Soviet defectors, very senior Soviet defectors. They really saw the vulnerabilities they had and the weaknesses they had.

Allison: Was there any hint that they were on the verge of collapse?

Zinni: There was. I don't think that maybe we were that tuned in or listening as hard. We interviewed one very senior defector. He was a senior official in GRU, their equivalent to like our DIA, military intelligence, and we were talking to him about Soviet vulnerabilities in terms of military if we did this and that. He says, "You don't

understand.” He says, “Imagine if you’re the leader of the Soviet Union and you go to sleep every night knowing your enemy feeds your military.” That all the grain shipments—and they were having crop failures—and agriculture and the food sources coming from the West were what was feeding the army. He said, “You don’t understand it,” which gave me tremendous insights into these kinds of things.

Allison: Your enemy is feeding you.

Zinni: Yes, their military.

Allison: But that would show a real weakness there.

Zinni: So, toward the end of that, now the debate was happening as to who would be the next Commandant in the Marine Corps, and so there were all sorts of things happening in terms of whether it was going to be General Gray, General [Cheatham], who was going to be next Commandant, East Coast, West Coast, and all of that. And I was kind of watching from afar up there. That was the issue. And then General Gray became the Commandant and I get a call from the monitor, saying General Gray wants you to go down to LANT and wants to line you up for one of the MEUs. Now, the MEUSOCs had just started. The first MEUSOC was out, but it was kind of not really up to speed and the second one was getting ready. They were trying to improve the training. He wanted me in that pipeline for like the second or third MEUSOC. I thought, “This is great. I’m back to Camp Lejeune. This is going to be great.” In the meantime, I get a call from the chief of staff of III MEF, who’s in town in Washington, said he wants to see me. So I meet him while I’m down here. He says General Godfrey, who now left Headquarters Marine Corps and is now commanding III MEF, he says, “General Godfrey knows you’re very close to General Gray, knows General Gray’s wants you

to be a MEU commander,” but General Godfrey says, “If you want to come out to Okinawa, he gives you first shot at 9th Marines, the regiment.” So now I’ve got a regiment and a MEU, and I’m thinking about this. One of the things I always wanted to do in the Marine Corps is experience everything, I mean, experience . . .

Allison: You’d mentioned that last time.

Zinni: . . . 3d Marine Division, and I had three tours in the 2d Marine Division and I’d been in 1st Marine Division in Vietnam but not on the West Coast, and my time in Okinawa was in 3d FSSG, but not 3d Division or anything like that. And I started to weigh these, and I thought about you’re in the infantry, a regiment is always a kind of a thing—the MEU, of course, is fantastic. And so I really agonized over this. I asked my family what they wanted to do and they said it’s my call, whatever I wanted to do. And they were having a hard time in the Marine Corps getting people wanting to go to Okinawa, too, and everybody knew that I was pretty close with General Gray, and I thought, General Gray’s the Commandant now and the ideas of the bubbas. They had this thing about the bubbas and the bubbas get the priority in all this. If I go down to II MEF and that’s his thing down there and MARFORLANT, it looks like the guys are going out there. So I said, “I’m going to go to Okinawa.” So I told the monitor, he said, “It’s up to you. I can do it either way. If you want to go to Okinawa, all right, I have a hard time getting people who want to go.” I said I’d go there. So General Gray called me, really pissed off.

Allison: Was he, really?

Zinni: And I said, “Well, look at it this way.” I said, “You’re the Commandant of the Marine Corps now. If I’m viewed as one of your guys and by me going to Okinawa that shows

the whole Marine Corps it's not just favoring II MEF or whatever. So he kind of mumbled and grumbled and said, "Whatever you want to do." So we go to Okinawa, 9th Marines, go to this fantastic tour. I got out there and General Godfrey says, "You own Camp Hansen and everything in it, and you own the 9th Marines." He says, "You run it the way you want to. You're not going to get a lot of micromanagement from here," from the MEF or the division. They were double-hatted. He was double-hatted at that time. "All your battalions are up to speed, your rotational battalions, so all your battalions come manned, trained, ready to go." I had the camp up there. We built great relationships with the [local] community up there.

Allison: Was that a challenge, particularly challenging aspect?

Zinni: Yes, it was and, again, I really want to pay a lot of attention to that. There were some strains in the relationship when I got there and I really wanted to work with it. I became very close personal friends with the mayor of Kin, with the head of the assembly and the people out there. I spent a lot of time with them, did a lot on the camp side, working with them, and we created a great relationship. And, knock on wood, in the two-plus years I had the regiment, we never had a serious incident out there.

Allison: Which is pretty good. I mean, those things seem to happen a lot.

Zinni: A lot of [it] has to do with heading off incidents. If you have a Marine that's in a bar and he's getting a little rowdy, we convinced the bar owners and others out there, call up. And before you have the MPs and the Japanese police, we had the courtesy patrol. We had our own camp guard. We'd go out and grab the guy, bring him back in before anything could happen. So it worked out well. So we didn't have any serious

incidents, which made the relationships go well. We did a lot of things for the community on the base, so the whole community relations, working with the Okinawans, I really enjoyed that. It kind of took me back, strangely, in a way, to Vietnam and being with the Vietnamese people. I had two other things befall me there, too. One was the 9th Marines was also the RLT-9, with the 9th MEB, so we had the regimental landing team responsibilities for the MEB, so we did all the exercises in Korea and everywhere else. Wherever the MEB went, we went as the RLT. So I had the regiment and the RLT. Then General Gray came out and he—by this time, General Godfrey had gone to MARFORPAC in Hawaii and—III MEF was now commanded by Norm Smith.

Allison: He had III MEF?

Zinni: He became III MEF commander. But he came in as III MEF commander. General Gray came out as the Commandant on a visit and he says to him, says to the general, “I want a MEUSOC out here.” We had it on the West Coast. We had it on the East Coast . . .

Allison: They didn’t stand one up on the West Coast?

Zinni: We want one out here, and so the general says, “How do we do that?” And of course he knew that I had been on the study group and all that, so he decides that 9th Marines will be the core for developing the MEUSOC. So now I had another staff, some of my regimental staff, also double-hatted as the MEUSOC staff, but I also had from the air wing and the FSSG a MEU staff. And then we went through—they stood up an SOTG, [Wheeler], [Baker], [Kevin Condry], Jack Muth were the SOTG guys, and they stood up at Camp Hansen.

Allison: Jack who?

Zinni: Muth, M-U-T-H. And so we ended up with the SOTG at Camp Hansen, the MEUSOC there, and instead of rotating MEU headquarters, there was just one. We were the 35th MEUSOC, and we started the MEUSOC program out there. So I had the MEU and we deployed a couple times. We deployed to the Philippines a couple times. Well, not just the exercises, like Balikatan, but we went down on two events, one, when they shot Colonel Rowe, who was the attaché in the Philippines who was killed by the NPA. And another time when the NPA [killed] some airmen at Clark Air Force Base. We went down on two security missions down there to lock down the base and provide security, do the patrolling, went down on one humanitarian mission.

Allison: Typhoon relief.

Zinni: Typhoon relief, and actually encountered some NPA in the course of that, too. So we deployed a couple of times on the MEUSOC, so it was a great time out there, because we had the RLT business done, the exercise in Korea, deploying the Amphibious Ready Group up in Japan. We were the permanent MEU with them, doing the MEUSOC training, doing the regular regimental training and everything else, so it was a great couple of years.

Allison: That was some real-world stuff you got to do.

Zinni: Yes, real-world stuff . . .

Allison: In the Philippines.

Zinni: . . . the exercises, the Philippines contingencies.

Allison: What's your perspective on the Korean contingencies? I mean, the type of training that we do with the Koreans there.

Zinni: Well, back in those days, we did the Team Spirits before they were canceled, and I liked them, because first of all it's major amphibious operations, in the landings and all, but then the exercise went across all of Korea. I mean, you basically were operating out in the villages in place of the troops, really, locally, because there was a real sense—you were in the villages. You were in the towns, working with the ROKs. I knew a lot of the ROK Marines and the officers really, really well, built a great relationship with them. So it was great operating with them. We did a lot of good training with them in their Mountain Warfare School, went down to the Philippines in the jungle training center down there. So the training was great, the real-world deployments were great. Having the MEU and the regiment and the regimental landing team was great. So you had all three pieces come together.

Allison: You lost a helicopter down there.

Zinni: We lost a couple. I lost one on the MEUSOC, went in the water at night, doing the night training, and then I lost one in Korea, a [CH-]53 loaded with troops, so we had two helicopter accidents there.

Allison: That must have been kind of the downside of the time.

Zinni: Yeah, it was really hard. We lost a 53, and I think we lost about 16. We lost a [CH-]46 on the MEUSOC and lost about eight, but the good news on the MEUSOC, that despite the tragedy—we lost a great lieutenant there, too.

Allison: Who?

Zinni: He was in 3/3. I can't remember his name. They had the platoon. They were the expert swimmers. Had they not been the swimmers, I don't think they would have gotten out

of that helicopter. There was a great sergeant who got an award for getting all the— he saved about nine troops and got them out.

Allison: You talk about one incident in your book, the helicopter from hell or something like that? Is that the thing that happened in the Philippines, too?

Zinni: No, it was the [one] that happened in Korea. A helicopter came in and the pilot was just making really hard maneuvers and picked up the troops, came out with the 53, banked really hard and put it in. The MEUSOC helicopter we lost, the great pilot, and I'd been up with him before, with night vision goggles. It was pitch dark. He flew off the deck and there was some transmission from the ship and all, and he got momentarily distracted, and there was no horizon. I mean, I was on the bridge and it was pitch black, and he just literally flew into the water.

Allison: Just got disoriented.

Zinni: Got disoriented for a second there, which is all it would take, and he was a great pilot, pilot time at night—excuse me, on night vision goggles, so it was just a tragedy.

Allison: All that stuff was just coming in . . .

Zinni: Yes, I mean, sometimes I think the casualties you take in peacetime—when I was a battalion commander, we lost our doctor on a Cobra crash. And the ones you take sometimes in peacetime are the harder, because in combat you're sort of geared up for it. You're expecting the casualties. You don't in peacetime.

Allison: Yes, sir. Do you recall Major General N. H. Smith.

Zinni: That's Smith, General Smith.

Allison: Is that who had III MEF.

Zinni: Yes, Norm Smith, yes.

Allison: What did he mean by “you could have supervised the logistics arena more aggressively?”

Zinni: Yes, he was always saying that you’ve got to pay more attention to the administration and logistics end of all this, which I thought we were doing really well. We had a tough logistician, a colonel there that was the G-4 of the division, very demanding. I liked him. He was a neighbor at Camp Courtney, but he was hard as nails and really demanding, which I thought was good, and I think put a lot on us in the regiments and all to do better and better, and I think he always convinced the general that you had to do better . . .

Allison: On logistics and stuff.

Zinni: Logistics and . . .?

Allison: The paperwork.

Zinni: And General Smith would always say to me, “Listen, Zinni. You’re an okay commander, but you better get this staff stuff right. You don’t have enough staff experience. You need more staff experience.” So I said, “I don’t need a thing.”

Allison: What is the most difficult part of running a regiment or a MEUSOC? What’s the big challenge there?

Zinni: The difficult thing was running the camp. I was the camp commander, and that was a significant camp. I mean, you had over 9,000 Marines and a number of civilians. It was a huge camp, the biggest one on Okinawa—Hansen—so you’ve got the physical plant and the camp. You’re a camp commander. I had a camp staff. You’re a regimental commander. You’re a regimental landing team commander, which means it’s not just a regiment, but you have the attachments that come with that, the tanks,

the artillery and all that and the exercise planning and the deployment and the work with the MEB, and then you're a MEU commander. On the camp commander side, I answered to this commanding general of Camp Smedley D. Butler. At the time, it was Brigadier Generals Bob Johnston and [Frank A.] "Sam" Huey. So now I had a camp responsibility. In my regimental hat, I answered to the division commander. In my RLT hat, I answered to the MEB commander, and in my MEU hat I answered to the MEF commander. So I had four bosses and four different requirements that I was working at the same time and four different staffs. Now, some of those staffs overlapped, like my regimental staff was also part of my MEU staff and also part of the RLT staff. So it was really demanding. You were pushed every which way, not to mention you're managing the rotational battalions that are coming in, and, of course, getting them in and getting them oriented and get their training. And some of the battalions would go off to do—they were always looking to get off-island, do training and you had to work that and make sure you—I really tried to get them off as much as possible to do training, because training was limited in Okinawa.

Allison: Sure.

Zinni: Though we did regimental training. They said you couldn't do it. We did. I took the regiment to the NTA and everything else, and it was hard, because you don't have a lot of maneuver space or a lot of restrictions on what you can do and fire. So you're managing the rotation units when they leave. The supply business, the turnover, it's got to be managed really carefully. So you have that, too. On top of all that, General Godfrey was a big believer that even though we had a lot of tenant commands at Camp Hansen—we had LAAM Battalion and a bunch of other combat engineers and

everything else—he believed—to quote him, he said, “You’re like a brigade commander out there. Those outfits answer to you.” Well, their bosses or somewhere else maybe didn’t feel that way, but he was insistent they answered to me.

Allison: But they’re not in your chain of command.

Zinni: But they’re not in my chain. Well, they are on the camp side, but he wanted me to have an operational kind of involvement in command, too, and a lot of those guys were coming to me with their issues and things, and some of them actually did chop to me as RLT, like the engineers up there. I think one of their companies chopped to me as the RLT, and so you had that responsibility, too. Then you had the relationships out in town on top of that. So when you looked at all your duty, I mean there were . . .

Allison: That’s a lot to bite off.

Zinni: I loved it, though.

Allison: Did you?

Zinni: I’ve got to tell you, it was not—it was hard work, but it was really good stuff. I mean, you not only were learning a lot, you were doing a lot. It was everything you’d go into the Marine Corps to do. You were in charge. I interacted with great people. I mean, all the generals I answered to were fantastic—[Bob Johnston], [Sam Huey], General Godfrey, General Smith, General Christmas, they were all my bosses in one way or another out there—General Stackpole for a while. And they were great bosses, fantastic in every respect. The relationship with the community went well. The mayor and the assembly and the chamber of commerce out there, the Bar Owners’ Association. We had a great relationship with the bar owners.

Allison: That would be key.

Zinni: It was a fantastic two years. While I was out there, General Gray puts me on the study to study the restructuring of the Marine Corps.

Allison: That's the special study, he'd called you back to Headquarters Marine Corps.

Zinni: Yes, so I had to keep coming back. General Van Riper was out there as the chief of staff; he was on it, too. So we had to keep coming back for this study.

Allison: Reorganization of the Marine Corps?

Zinni: Well, General Gray, prescient, believed we're now getting toward the late '80s. He foresees that something's coming and I think smelled the collapse of the Soviet Union or something else, but he said he really believed the Marine Corps is going to start taking cuts. He wanted to get ahead of the game and look at a Marine Corps with, say, 5,000 less, 10,000 less, 15,000 less. He didn't just want to take the cuts across the board or doing it on a snap. He wanted to restudy the entire structure from the bottom up, literally from the fire team up. And let's say at that time we had a 200,000-and-some man Marine Corps. What if we had a 190,000 Marine Marine Corps? What should it look like? This is our chance to restructure. So we came back here and did the studies on that, where we could get economies, where we could cut, innovative things we might want to put in. So we did that, came back on and off back here, from all of over the Marine Corps to do it here at Quantico at Liversedge Hall, where we did the study, gave it to him. So we did that, too.

Allison: So he had an inkling that something was in the winds there, but I guess what really happened was really a surprise with the Gulf War and everything.

Zinni: Yes, I mean, I think he foresaw a drawdown of forces, and I think he wanted to get ahead of it. At the same time, he had a lot of ideas about restructuring the Marine

Corps. He treated the Training and Education Command—he was revamping Quantico and what it was doing. So he wanted all that into the mix and how we would restructure. So it was a combination of foreseeing a potential cut, a lot of ideas about new organizations and structure, rethinking some of the way we're restructured and organized, looking for efficiencies out there. There were a lot of things when we looked at this—now, for example, division had a truck company, which didn't make sense, because FSSG had truck companies. And we discovered if you took the trucks from the division truck company and you put them into FSSG, you could save 100 spaces and still have the same capability and number of trucks. So why do you have a truck company in division when you can put all the trucks in one place that supports the division. A lot of resistance to that stuff when it came out.

Allison: They want to have their own stuff.

Zinni: Everybody wants their own stuff, but that's not the MAGTF concept. That's important. You save 100 billet spaces by consolidating truck companies. I mean, that was just one example, but there were a lot we were coming with, on postal and other things that could be managed a lot better. It was time to relook at those things and see what we could do, the way administration was done and everything, and support and that sort of thing. We did the studies back here.

Allison: Any idea to looking at aviation? They have their own logistics setup. Any idea, any thoughts of consolidating it down to the ground?

Zinni: Yes, we looked at consolidation. For example, we had different MP structures, but some of that had a logic to it. Like, aviation MPs, they have flight line security and some specialized missions, so you had to be careful with that. They weren't

necessarily interchangeable, but we at least had to ask the questions why. Some of it came out that just it's the way it evolved and people wanted to have their own things. You could consolidate some. When you looked at it, it looked on the surface you could, but when you looked down deep into it, there were different missions and you had to account for that. But it was worth the study. I mean, I think the study produced a lot of good thoughts and ideas and, if nothing else, at least started the thinking. There was a lot of resistance to it and the pressure wasn't on yet. But I think if nothing else, that study started the thinking about how you do this. But I think it at least initiated the thinking and also incorporated some of the ideas in how you would manage some of the new things that General Gray was introducing, particularly in the restructuring of Quantico.

Allison: He stood up MCRDAC [Marine Corps Research, Development, and Acquisition Command] that became SYSCOM [Systems Command].

Zinni: And MCCDC [Marine Corps Combat Development Command] and the requirements moving down here and Training and Education Command and Marine Corps University.

Allison: All right, sir. Going back to—I've got a couple of questions that I'd like to ask, going all the way back to the National War College. I read somewhere where Jack Sheehan said, "I saw the Marine Corps post-Beirut. I saw the Marine Corps internally eat itself alive over Beirut." Any comments on that? Any perspective on that?

Zinni: Yes, it was a bad time. Frankly, we got caught with our pants down.

Allison: Did we really? Or was it because the Marine Corps was . . .

Zinni: No, I'll tell you, Paddy Collins was a very close friend of mine, was going back and forth in and out of Beirut. He was the assistant to Ambassador Habib. The guy who was doing the shuttle diplomacy back and forth, and so he was going in there. He told me one time, he said, "It's surreal out there." He said, "There's Katyusha rockets going off, there's fighting, and you have Marines inside the airport, in the wire, in their PT gear, playing volleyball, like there's some force field around them, like they're immune from that. And although they're not the targets then, it's just a matter of time. I mean, we're just sitting there. We're not doing anything. We're just sitting there." And he was the first one that said something that triggered in—and as I watch that—again, I'm at National War College and I'm looking at this from a distance, but I just wondered, "What's the mission? What are we doing? We're just there for the sake of being there." Then the controversy became when they called the naval gunfire and shot into the Chouf Mountains in support of the—I guess the Christian forces. And that meant we took sides, and there was no awareness that that act had now changed the neutrality that we had and made them vulnerable. And then we had the embassy bombed, which should have told us something right before that. Well, in the aftermath of all this, of course, General Trainor said to me—this is when I went to Headquarters Marine Corps—he said, "One more act against the Marine Corps like this," and he says, "we're all gone," meaning the commandant, him, pointed to me. He said, "We've got to get this straight."

Allison: You mean after Beirut.

Zinni: After Beirut. When General Gray then did a study, looking at the preparation of that MEU and BLT for deployment and—or maybe it's an investigation, or I don't know—

but the findings on the number of actual training days and the preparation, I mean, this goes back then to all that fell out in terms of MEUSOC and relooking at the training of the MEUs. The number of actual days in the field and training days and everything else, because of the late joining of people, it revealed a lot of flaws, I think, in the system. I mean it's not a matter of good men and good leadership. I mean I know Tim Geraghty, who was the MEU commander there, who was one of the finest officers I've ever met. But unless you have the manning of the units, the training set aside and protected—what we've evolved to now—those kinds of flaws came out in the system, systemic failures and problems as opposed to leadership in any way, and I think that's what Jack Sheehan was referring to. And it was a dark day that we allowed it to get to that point. We didn't think it through, and allowed those things to happen. The other thing I learned from that, which held me in good stead, General Gray stood up, and he was the division commander at the time—he stood up and assumed responsibility, submitted his letter of resignation.

Allison: Did he, really?

Zinni: Yes.

Allison: I didn't know that.

Zinni: And everybody that I've ever talked to, Jack Murtha and everybody else in Congress, says that's what they look for, somebody that will take responsibility, because he stood up and took responsibility. Of course, it was not all on his shoulders. He was just the division commander responsible for the BLT and the combatant commander, as we would call them now or CINCs, should have had more responsibility. There were all sorts of issues. And, of course, there was this heated exchange from the

Commandant, General Kelley, before Congress that—and it was a sensitive issue at Headquarters Marine Corps. Every time Beirut came up, you couldn't talk about it without the emotions. It hit General Kelley pretty hard, a lot of emotion, a lot of bitterness in some quarters. So it was a traumatic experience for the Marine Corps, and it required a lot of introspection and reflection on the way we did business. I think in many ways contributed to our thinking that eventually MEUSOC was produced. It certainly was burned into General Gray's soul, I think in many ways. I've seen that from the perspective of the division—2d Division incurred most of the casualties, obviously, in the BLT.

Allison: I was always under the impression that the Marines, their ROE was set by someone above them, that they really didn't have any control over how they were going to . . .

Zinni: Well, this would be the internal debate. I went through this as a combatant commander. Who's responsible for force protection? You could argue on one side that your expectations as a combatant commander are that a unit comes to you fully trained and capable of its own basic force protection. It isn't the CINC's responsibility to tell them how to set up a 360, how to set up a system of protection and security. That ought to be basic to a ship, a squadron, a battalion, or whatever. You may establish the rules of engagement. When you go back and look at where the mistakes were made, were they made in basic unit training and unit application of force training or force protection? Were there restrictions and limitations placed on them by the combatant commander? I saw this in Khobar Towers. I came into CentCom [Central Command] after Khobar Towers, right after, and you had to debate whether the component commander, the Air Force commander, bore responsibility, [or] the local commander

out there, General Schwalier, or the CINC, General Peay. I mean no one could sort out who had responsibility. Although I had left command and was retired, they called me back over the USS *Cole*. Now, whose responsibility is it for security? I mean, we refueled in my time 28 ships in Aden, and this ship goes in and it gets hit by the very same tactic that everybody knew was the greatest threat. In that sense, 5th Fleet knew small boats and swimmers were the greatest threat. They were responsible for force protection. That ship went in and got hit by the threat that everybody knew was the greatest one. Now, so where does the responsibility lie?

People argue, well, you shouldn't have been refueling in Aden. Well, where else would you like to refuel? First of all, that's where the Navy wanted to refuel. Second of all, the Navy put a restriction on 51 percent fuel as the minimum a ship could have, so you can't bring them around outside of that area. What do you have in the area? You have Djibouti, Jeddah, all of which had a higher threat rating. So you can get in this internal [fur ball] of pointing fingers, which happens a lot of the time. But what I learned from General Gray is . . . you go in front of them and [as] he said, "I made the decision. It's mine." You stand up and you take responsibility. And so most people want to know that somebody was in charge and accepts responsibility. It doesn't mean that you made the mistake or it's your fault, but you accept responsibility.

Allison: Interesting.

Zinni: But there are not enough people wearing stars that do that, in my mind.

Allison: You said that made a big impression on you, when he did that.

Zinni: Yes, yes.

Allison: That's part of . . . I guess I was going to ask you about leadership. When you had the 9th Marines out in Okinawa, the situation is different. You were multitasking and your bosses were changing. Did the same mandate apply? You accept responsibility?

Zinni: We had an incident out in Okinawa where a company commander came out, hard-charging company commander, and he's training on a weekend, goes out in the rain on a live-fire range, and he attempts a maneuver on the range that the regulations in the range aren't very clear. And he attempts an envelopment in a very narrow range. Some rounds go out of the range and impacted, hit a couple houses, max range, down the road. When we go through and reconstruct this, the way the range was made, this is like one in a million that somebody would attempt this maneuver, but the range, it could happen, just the way it was designed. You would never think in a million years that it could happen. But then when you see it happen. The second thing was the range regs were not very clear on all this, and so they wanted to hang this poor company commander. The Japanese were looking for a head. The sub-unified command of Japan were looking for a head. They want this young company commander's head. So I said, "I refuse to do that. I'm the regimental commander." I said, "I accept responsibility. When those battalions come to Okinawa, it's my job to make sure they know what they're doing and they're training up to speed. If the range regs weren't clear, if the range design had a flaw that admittedly was very hard to see, it's still my responsibility to prepare those units. So if you're looking for somebody's head, it's mine, not that company commander's." At some point in time, there is a responsibility level, and you can't place it on some young company commander that arrives at Okinawa and is trying to do the right thing and didn't violate anything specifically.

Allison: Taking responsibility.

Zinni: Yes. Of course, they weren't in the mood to kill colonels.

Allison: Any comments on—now, along in this time, too, is the rise of the Rapid Deployment Joint Task Force [RDJTF], right?

Zinni: Mid-80s, the Carter doctrine, that creates the RDJTF.

Allison: Under Kelley, right?

Zinni: Under General Kelley. So General Kelley takes command of what was Strike Command. It now becomes the RDJTF, with obviously an orientation to the Persian Gulf. The threat was seen as the Soviet Union maybe coming down. Iran had now—the revolution had happened. It seemed vulnerable. So as an expression of the Carter doctrine, RDJTF was created and then becomes CentCom, the unified command under General Kingston after that. So this all happens in the mid-80s.

Allison: Mid-80s, right. But Reagan's president, so it's carrying the Carter doctrine forward. Reagan becomes president in '80. He's elected in 1980.

Zinni: Yes, but I think Carter created RDJTF and then Reagan . . .

Allison: I'm just not real clear on it.

Zinni: I think it became the unified command under Reagan, but the RDJTF's forerunner was created by Carter.

Allison: I guess General Crist was the first Marine?

Zinni: First Marine. His predecessor was General Kingston.

Allison: Okay, first CINC.

Zinni: Yes. And then General Crist and then General Schwarzkopf and then General Hoar. Then General Peay, then me, four Villanova graduates, General Crist, General Kelley, me and Admiral Fallon, combatant commanders, and CentCom.

Allison: Wow. What is it about Villanova, sir?

Zinni: We produce, second only to the Naval Academy, the greatest number of admirals and Marine generals.

Allison: It's a powerful—I mean, it's a very strong—has a very strong naval influence. That's interesting. I didn't know that. When you were at the National War College, you decided to get a master's degree from Central Michigan?

Zinni: Yes, I got a master's degree when I was instructor at Command and Staff College in management and supervision, and I did it after hours at Quantico. They had classes. I was in the Breckinridge library one day, saw a little pamphlet on it, and I'd been a business major, economics major, in college and I figured it'd be interesting how things had changed in the whole world of business and organization and structure, and of course had the time. So I did it and I completed it at the National War College. I started it here at Quantico when I was instructor at Command and Staff, completed it while I was up there. And then, when I was at Newport during the Strategic Studies Group, I got a second master's degree. Salve Regina had one on international relations and I had time while we were up there, as a geographic bachelor. My National War College time I could get credits for [the degree], plus a lot of what the work we were doing up there, the nonclassified stuff and other things, and the classes looked interesting.

Allison: Was this encouraged by the Marine Corps? I mean, was this particularly . . .

Zinni: The Marine Corps at that time was neutral, I'd say, at best. They were neither here nor there.

Allison: They're not real big on education.

Zinni: They weren't, at that time. They weren't that big on civilian education. And so I think you had to be really careful it didn't interfere with anything. I mean I did it at times when I had the time and I was convinced it would not draw away from the Marine Corps responsibilities.

Allison: Yes, sir. General Godfrey, any comments on him? He seems to be a pretty astute individual on international relations, very appropriate to what's coming down the pike?

Zinni: Yes, I really liked working for him. He had certain—I think any time, from that point of view, looking up at general officers, you could always see a trait or two that you know why they became generals. They're either brilliant, they're great leaders, they're very insightful and things like that. And what always impressed me about General Godfrey, he could really analyze things really well. He was a quick study. He could drill down to the core of things, paid attention to detail, did not micromanage. I mean he put people around him, whom he trusted in everything, then let them do what they needed to do, much like General Gray. Had a great operational sense, highly educated, Ivy League, brilliant guy. And I always liked General Godfrey. For some reason, you just find people that you click with. He sort of became a mentor, kind of took me under his wing.

Allison: Like General Gray.

Zinni: Like General Gray, General Trainor. As a matter of fact, I was just with General Trainor and our old S-3 from 1/5. We were reliving the operation in which I was wounded.

Allison: Really?

Zinni: I was at General Trainor's house, going through, getting the maps out. Which was interesting, because I was telling them things from the company commander's point of view that they didn't know, some pieces that they didn't—and they were telling me things from the battalion side that I didn't know, so the story was pretty good.

Allison: Wow, I wish I would have had a tape recorder there. That would have been good. How's he doing?

Zinni: He's doing well. Yes, he looks good.

Allison: Did he write another book, involved in . . .

Zinni: I don't think so. I'm not sure what he's up to now, in that area.

Allison: Did you read his book about—what book is that?

Zinni: *Cobra II*?

Allison: Yes.

Zinni: Yes, I read that, and I read his one, *The General's War*.

Allison: *General's War*, right. I haven't read *Cobra II*. I read the one about *General's War*. I thought that was good. It's a good overview of the Gulf War. Okay, sir, during this time, while you were a special operations officer at Headquarters Marine Corps, Goldwater-Nichols is just around the corner. What was being talked about jointness?

Zinni: The services hated Goldwater-Nichols.

Allison: Did they really? That's what Jack Sheehan said.

Zinni: Yes, General Kelley feared that it would create, in his worlds, a class of Mandarins, he said. I think the big fear was that Goldwater-Nichols would create a joint service, in addition to Army, Navy, Air Force, Marine Corps, and there would be these purple people that would be in charge. Of course, what Goldwater-Nichols did is they didn't create a separate joint structure. They had the services man the structure and had components within the structure. I always say that Goldwater-Nichols was brilliant in the way it created integrating agencies that allow participation, representation and a sense of ownership from the services, and that's why it eventually worked out so well. But the fear was that Goldwater-Nichols was going to create a joint structure, separate from the services. At the time—our mission, if you will, was to try to find every reason to kill Goldwater-Nichols. I was an action officer on some of that. We did papers on why the Marine Corps is already joint, we're joint enough and everything else.

Allison: Well, the Corps is joint.

Zinni: Well, it's joint in a sense.

Allison: In its combined arms.

Zinni: In its combined arms sense. But jointness, I'm a big—I spent most of my general officer time in joint commands versus others, but even when I was in a Marine Corps command at I MEF, we were a JTF most of the time, doing things. So I really became immersed in the joint world, right from the time I got promoted to brigadier general. So the joint world, General Jones and others used to kid me about being purple, about losing my Marine Corps identity in many ways.

Allison: General James Jones?

Zinni: Yes.

Allison: He was in DC at that time, wasn't he?

Zinni: Yes, he was General Gray's executive assistant when General Gray was Commandant.

Allison: Commandant, oh, okay. So you all had been friends.

Zinni: Yes.

Allison: Had you known him from before?

Zinni: Yes, we served together in MMOA. So I knew him from then.

Allison: Along with Peter Pace.

Zinni: Along with Pace and Neal and Hoar and Sheehan, as well as a bunch of other future generals in there. There must have been about two dozen that went on to be generals out of that tour up there.

Allison: Something in the water.

Zinni: Yes, something in the water.

Allison: It's amazing.

Zinni: When I was—after I had two-plus years as 9th Marines, I was slated to be the G-3 of the MEF, III MEF, and then I get word that General Gray is bringing me back from Okinawa. General Smith wasn't too happy, to be the chief of staff of the T&E Center, Training and Education Center at Quantico. So I came back here to Quantico, short tour, didn't finish my three years out there, became the chief of staff under General Caulfield for one year and was selected for brigadier general. So I came back here and I think Quantico for one year, which is good, to see the—I mean, I hated to leave Okinawa and the MEF and all, because I really enjoyed it out there, but I got a sense of all the changes that were occurring back here, the creation of the T&E Center, the

Doctrine Center, the Marine Corps University. All that I'd heard about and knew General Gray's thinking on all that. To see it in action—General Van Riper was president of the university, so to come back and get involved in all that again.

Allison: Like you said, you always liked Quantico.

Zinni: Yes, so that was a one-year shot.

Allison: Could I ask you another question about your time at Headquarters Marine Corps? Any comments on the LCAC [landing craft air, cushioned] or other new technologies?

Zinni: Yes, the LCAC and the new AAV [advanced amphibious assault vehicle] and the JVT, to be the Osprey, were the three ship-to-shore assets under MAGTF concepts and capabilities we were working with. Obviously, the LCAC was further along than the other two, but we had this sort of—on the drawing board was AAV. JVT, the concept was well developed. General Keith Smith was the deputy chief of staff, aviation. He came to General Godfrey and says, "Helicopter programs can't just be DCS Aviation. You need a ground involvement," which was I think very unlike what we mostly . . . aviation was on one side, ground the other side. So that's how I got involved in the JVT program. He wanted a ground involvement to make sure the ground requirements and everything else were put into that. So it really got me into understanding much more the requirements, limitations on helicopter technology kind of coming into the end of its life in terms of the threat environment, the potential for tilt rotor and other possibilities were being looked at [at] the time, looking at threat, ship-to-shore requirements. So we got really into a lot of the programmatics and the concepts of employment.

Allison: Did you see the vision that the [team] was seeing there?

Zinni: Yes. We worked our own study, the two aviators, one named [John] “Glad” Castellaw, the other [Emerson] “Emo” Gardner, and myself. We were the three, and I was the ground guy and obviously Emo and Glad are now three stars.

Allison: Now it’s about to come to fruition. They’re going to be deploying it to Iraq.

Zinni: Yes, I was disappointed in the hydraulics and software problems that they had because I thought that program had been around so long, they had looked at it every which way—and to have those kinds of flaws. But they seem corrected now and coming into fruition. We were impressed with the measures taken in terms of survivability and the range and obviously a lot of other things that gave it just added capability. But, like everything else, the Marine Corps is always on the cutting edge, use of helicopters and developing of amphibious assault and with new technology and stuff that’s so highly complex as these systems, you end up with problems and issues. That’s the story of the Marine Corps. It’s always been on sort of the cutting edge.

Allison: It seems like it has a lot of trouble coming up with the funds to develop something this complex, to me.

Zinni: Well, part of the problems you run into, it’s going to be like the Joint Strike Fighter with the V/STOL. People are always going to look at the capability and say the Marine Corps is relatively small and the costs for such a capability to service such a small component always comes into issue. No one really argues the benefits, but people argue the cost versus the scope of what we need to do, and it becomes a tough sell to convince people that in the long run it becomes much more efficient. An amphib ship becomes a carrier in some places. You don’t need big-deck carriers. Like off of Somalia, they didn’t need big-deck carriers because you had Harriers and attack

helos and that sort of thing. Even the Italians and others had brought ships down and basically were using V/STOL technologies, so you didn't need to move a big deck out of the Persian Gulf or Mediterranean to cover a place where the air requirements could have been easily met by those type of aircraft.

Allison: Do you remember conflict with the Navy on these issues?

Zinni: Well, there's always budget issues with the Navy. Because it's the Department of the Navy budget, there's always competition. Later on, when I became Deputy CG in MCCDC, we ran these, quote, "SECNAV war games," they were called. They weren't really war games. They were—we used a war gaming kind of notional concept to highlight the programs and the capabilities so that when we presented them to the secretary of the Navy, the CNO and the Commandant, you could see the capabilities and help them make decisions. At the time, I did it with the Navy—Sweatpea Allen, a Navy two star. At the time, I was a one star. We were responsible for putting these games together and highlighting the programs, and we brought all the one-star, two-star Navy, Marine Corps people together and the requirements people together, and we would go up to Newport or we'd do it down at Quantico, and we would have knock-down, drag-out fights in these things, debating capabilities, because everything was a zero-sum game. The thing I would say about that is, as much as we argued and fought with each other, at the end of the day we built some tremendous friendships, and not only friendships, we found a venue to listen to each other, to argue professionally. Then we presented it to the four stars, and they made the decisions, along with the secretary of the Navy, in how they would go forward. But I would remember that we would have heated battles and arguments and get red in the face and scream at each



Photo by SSgt R. L. Jaggard, courtesy of Defense Imagery, VIRN: DM-SC-90-01322

Commandant of the Marine Corps Gen Alfred M. Gray talks with then-Col Anthony C. Zinni, commanding officer of 9th Marines, and MajGen Norman H. Smith, commanding general of 3d Marine Division, in February 1989 at Camp Hansen, Okinawa.



Photo by A1C Randy S. Mallard, courtesy of Defense Imagery, VIRIN: f3222-SPT-95-007-03-RSM0114

Maj W. M. McDaniel, U.S. Air Force, listens to LtGen Anthony C. Zinni, Combined Task Force commander, at Moi International Airport on 1 February 1995. Then-LtGen Zinni was in Mombasa to be briefed on the progress of U.S. forces bringing in personnel, material, and equipment to support the withdrawal of UN peacekeepers from Mogadishu, Somalia.

From left, Col John W. Moffett, chief of staff for deputy CinC Central Command; then-LtGen Anthony C. Zinni, commanding general, I MEF; and, far right Gen J.H. Binford Peay, (USA) commanding general CentCom and the CentCom Sergeant Major Hall, present Alex Kapitanski, the flagman of Camp Pendleton and Oceanside, with a gift commemorating Operation United Shield and his patriotic activities

Photo courtesy of Col John W. Moffett





Photo courtesy of Col John Moffett

From left, then-Lt Gen Anthony C. Zinni, Italian Captain Bracco, the liaison officer to I MEF and United Shield, Chief of Staff Col John W. Moffett, and the unidentified captain of the Italian aircraft carrier, Giuseppe Garibaldi, all on board the Garibaldi during Operation United Shield.

Then-Gen Anthony C. Zinni, CinC of Central Command, speaks at a Joint Task Force (JTF)-Southwest Asia (SWA) event at JTF-SWA Headquarters in Saudi Arabia in April 1998.

Photo by TSgt James D. Mossman, USAF, courtesy of Defense Imagery, VIRN: 980401-F-AF179-007





Photo by Cpl Jeremy Stone, courtesy of Defense Imagery, VIRN: 000811-M-YP214-011
Commandant of the Marine Corps, Gen James L. Jones pins the Meritorious Service Medal on then-Gen Anthony C. Zinni at his retirement ceremony on Marine Corps Base Quantico, Virginia, on 11 August 2000.

other, then afterwards go out and have a beer, and you leave it in the room, and you do your best and it goes up on its merits. My hat was off to Admiral Owens and to General Krulak, who were the two that did the requirements for Navy and Marine Corps respectively that structured these and had us put them together to present to them. So they allowed the one stars and two stars and all of us to have at it and make best cases and present these sorts of things. So I thought it was a good system. I wish it would have continued.

Allison: Anything on MPS [maritime prepositioned ships], sir?

Zinni: Yes, MPS was brilliant. I think that the whole idea—under General Barrow, MPS was started. There were a lot of concerns that now we would maybe harm the amphibious ship program in some way. We obviously, because of the reduction in gray bottoms and amphibious ships, we needed some capacity like this. This gave all the benefits that everybody's aware of. It gave us tremendous wherewithal to reinforce. It gave us mobile repositories of combat power that could be moved to the scene of the crime. You didn't have to have troops loitering. There were limitations, obviously. They were black bottoms. They are more vulnerable. You can't take them into harm's way. You need to have places where you marry up forces with troops and then move them in. But I think the concept of sort of a float prepositioning ready to go, you can move it into an area before you deploy troops. You found ways to compensate for the lack of the amphibious gray bottom capability that we needed—we always had a shortfall in the requirement. And the way the ships were loaded, I think the greatest strength over the other maritime preposition, like the Army and the others, is we did this maintenance cycle. So those ships always came in for maintenance and back out, so

the equipment was always in a high state of readiness. I was impressed with MPS when I saw it in Somalia because those ships were back-loaded from the Persian Gulf War [material] and we had to bring them down to Somalia right away. We thought, well, God, we're going to see this stuff is rode hard, put away wet. The equipment was in great shape.

Allison: Was it?

Zinni: Back-loaded, the way it was put in. Even though it hadn't gone back from cyclical maintenance, the whole concept and the way it was treated and the way it was redone and the way it was managed demonstrated that you could do back-to-back missions with the equipment. The continuous relook at what's on those ships is important, too. General [Gene A.] Deegan I think deserves a lot of credit for the real basic work on all of that. He was the one that really went through the detail of what goes on every one of those ships, how we load it, the whole cycle, and everything else. He was really like the—there were many people that worked on that, especially logisticians at Blount Island facilities and everything else. But General Deegan was the guy at Headquarters Marine Corps that had to put it all together, that preceded me and did all that. So what I got was basically a finished product.

Allison: More on the doctrine, you worked in Plans Division, Plans and Doctrine Division, at MCCDC with him. You worked with him when you were at Headquarters Marine Corps as the special operations officer?

Zinni: Yes, I think at that time—the Marine Corps has never been big on doctrine.

Allison: Right, not dogs to doctrine.

Zinni: Yes, we're not—we tend to view doctrine not as a driver, but as a guide or a guideline. It's interesting, because the Army advertises a doctrine-based system. In other words, doctrine drives your manning, your equipment, everything else. The Marine Corps has always advertised a concepts-based requirement system, which means doctrine is a subset of the concept. You have a concept and you do—the acronym, DOCMLP, the doctrine of the organization, the manning, the personnel and the logistics requirements, the leader training, all that, and education. All that goes with it and makes up the structure. And so that difference in concepts and doctrine is you become less doctrinaire, maybe, and it's both good and bad. I think in some sense not being hidebound by doctrine, not viewing it as prescriptive, made the Marine Corps in many ways more innovative, more flexible. In some ways, I've seen where you don't have a standardization then across the board, like you do in Army units, and that lack of standardization can bite you in many ways. So there has to be a balance that's struck in that. I knew from my time in the joint world, for example, when I was the commander of CentCom, you would have a Marine MEU ashore in Kuwait from time to time, doing their training. And you had an Army battalion combat team ashore. When the battalion combat team wasn't there, the MEU was there, and you always had to have a ground presence. And this was up in Kuwait on the Udari Range; a lot of training and everything went on up there. You could shoot all your weapons. It was like Twentynine Palms or NTA. It was great training. I'd go out and visit and I would go see, let's say an Army unit, and it's what they call the corral there, which is basically like a base camp operation. Every single Army unit I saw, that base camp was exactly the same. I don't care if it was a battalion from the 4th Infantry Division

or the 10th Mountain Division or what it was, that base camp was the same. Every time I went to see an MEU, it was different.

Allison: Everybody had their own.

Zinni: Everybody had their own idea, their own structure on the ground, laid it out in different ways, organized it differently. Some were pretty tight; some were not so tight. But it just surprised me. The first time this really hit home to me, when I was in EuCom [European Command], I went out to Hohenfels, one of the training centers out there. The Army had Grafenwoehr and Hohenfels, and I went out to see some Army units training. And I was out there when it was an Army infantry company that was going to do a breach of a minefield and an attack. And so when I got there, I met the brigade commander and he said to me, "Well, what you're going to see is this company's going to go through. Now, let me tell you where this company is in their training. Let me tell you what their weaknesses are and the strengths are," and the brigade commander goes through all this, our equivalent to a regimental commander. I went down to the battalion and the battalion commander. I'm standing there with him. We're about to see this thing go down. He says, "Well, in terms of this company, let me tell you what its weaknesses and strengths are and what you'll see." The first thing that struck me, it was exactly the same as the brigade commander. Then, when I went down to see the company commander, just before he launched, he says, "Well, we're going to do this. Here's the weaknesses in my company. This is what I think we'll not do so well and need to work on. This is what we'll do extremely well." Then I watched it, and it was exactly as the brigade, battalion, and company commander predicted. The second thing that impressed me was if you had weaknesses, he didn't

try to cover up for them or he didn't try to make excuses or deny it. They were very open about what they didn't do well, what they needed to improve on. And so, to me, there is a strength in that system. Now, I've also seen where that kind of system approach and thought it hidebound by the prescription sometimes limited.

Everybody's more focused on standards and prescriptions and doesn't have maybe the flexibility. Marine units, when you see them in situations that are nontraditional, when there's no doctrine for it, they adapt. They're much more adaptable. I saw that in Somalia and other places. They adapt. They're very flexible in what they do. So there are positives and negatives to that and somewhere there's a balance that needs to be struck on all that, it seems to me. And the good units, be they Army or Marine Corps, sort of find that balance, between doctrine as a guideline and doctrine as a prescription and how you sort of do enough of it and stay bound by it in a way that still doesn't limit your initiative and your flexibility.

Allison: That's really an interesting perspective.

Zinni: I remember when I was in Somalia, when we had a problem down in a small town called Kismayo and we had to get down there. We didn't have a good feel for the situation. Things were going to crap down there, and the Army commander that came in when General Johnston said, "Go down there and fix it," says, "Well, what do you mean, fix it? What's your definition? You need to give me the missions and the tasks and all this." And General Johnston got pissed off and said, "I don't have time for that s——t. Just get down there and fix it now. We don't have enough time." And his three came to me. I was the three of the operation, and saying, "Well, we've got to line out our mission, our task order, everything." At the same time, General Johnston to

General Wilhelm, who had 1st Marine Division, said, “Charlie, just go down there and fix it.” Charlie goes—they’re off. It was the difference. So you see both sides of that. Like I said, I’ve seen instances where that kind of standardization and approach and everything showed tremendous benefits, other times when it became maybe too bounding, in many ways, and restrictive, sometimes when the loosey-goosey stuff gets too loosey-goosey and other times when it lends flexibility and enough intent that somebody can operate fully within it and draw upon it, so there’s always a balance to that. It’s the maneuver warfare argument that we had. I mean, the proponents of maneuver warfare, the loudest proponents, tended not to have much combat experience, they saw everything in such broad and fluid terms to not understand there’s a component to military operations that requires a lot of detail and planning and coordination and a term that they hate, synchronization. But you can’t put 1,000 airplanes into the air without a detailed plan and some sort of organization and structure and coordination and systems to manage it. It just doesn’t work that way. I mean I’ve experienced that. So this kind of balance is what we never seem to find.

Allison: Is that debate still going on, that maneuverist against . . .

Zinni: I don’t think so much anymore. I mean, not now, but at that time, yes.

Allison: In the mid-80s? Because I’m thinking of the Gulf War.

Zinni: I mean the maneuverists had a great point. We became—their term was attritionist. I think that’s a pejorative term and they tend to use pejorative terms, but we tend to become bound up by prescriptions and systems and systematic approaches to things and process and procedure. And they were right in criticizing that, but at the same time you can’t throw all that out. That’s necessary when you’re dealing with large-scale,

complex military exercises. There's a whole series of things that require that kind of process to be involved, or else you have chaos, fratricide, and confusion.

Allison: General Mundy came in during your time there, took over PP&O.

Zinni: Yes, General Mundy was very interested in what we were doing. At that time, we were relooking at how the Marine Corps thinks about itself conceptually, how it identifies itself. We had some really abstract ideas and thoughts. I think he was always very fascinated by that and very supportive of what I did in the concepts branch and was a great boss, very encouraging. So he had come in. There were several after General Trainor. We went through some people, you know, but when I left it was General Mundy.

Allison: Do you remember any particular ideas he had, as far as his thoughts on what the Marine Corps should be?

Zinni: He came in just as I was leaving, so there wasn't a lot of overlap in terms of before I went up to Newport for the Strategic Studies Group, but always very supportive, very interested in what we were doing, liked the idea of sort of the emerging concepts, encouraged us to think outside the box, was very supportive of looking forward, I think really wanted to carry on basically what General Godfrey had created in ops in doing that.

Allison: Were you still PTing a lot?

Zinni: Yes, always lifted weights. That was always my thing. For that whole time, I was doing that. My goal was to lift 315 pounds at age 50 or up until the time I got out of the Marine Corps, and I managed to do that.

Allison: Did you? That's pretty good.

Zinni: I can't claim that anymore, but I could then.

Allison: That was a very interesting time.

Zinni: Jack Cunningham was the G-4 of the division. He was a hard-nosed old crusty logistician, who always made life tough for us commanders, rightfully so. I like Jack. Jack's one of those old curmudgeons that knows his business, and he was my neighbor at Camp Courtney . . . Jack was hard-nosed. He was tough. I mean he was tough on the supply and logistics side of everything. You couldn't argue with the effects, it was good. He made you toe the line. And John Admire, an old friend and a great leader, great commander and I knew him out there in Okinawa and knew him from before and afterwards in the Marine Corps. He came out and got the division when I had the MEF after General Libutti.

Allison: Any comments on Valiant Blitz, the operation in Korea?

Zinni: Yes, we did the Valiant Blitz and the Team Spirit. Valiant Blitz was the MEB exercises, 9th MEB, so we did the MEB landings and the operations ashore, Valiant Blitz. Then the Team Spirits were the MEF exercises, and we'd go there and it'd be the Army units. That was big, full-scale, CINC-level field exercises, which are fantastic. And then the staff exercises were the Ulchi Focus Lens, which were up in Yongsan. But I learned a lot about Korea. Like I said, made great friends with all the Koreans, particularly the ROK Marines, got to know the command, got to know the war plans. It was to carry on when I became MEF commander, too, later on.

Allison: Do you have any sort of relationship or any relations with the Chinese at that time? Either the Taiwanese or the Chinese?

Zinni: No. We did nothing with Taiwan or the Chinese. I mean, I've been on Taiwan, been into Taiwan but not in any kind of official capacity. When I was a second lieutenant at the Infantry Training Regiment, my executive officer was a Chinese Marine officer, because we had an exchange program with the Chinese Marines, meaning the Taiwanese. I had a second lieutenant as my executive officer in the Infantry Training Regiment. That was my only contact with them.

Allison: I notice that the UDP [unit deployment program] battalions who came in, were they coming out of Hawaii?

Zinni: I had them from both Camp Pendleton and Hawaii, so I had 5th, 7th, and 3d Marines. When we did exercises, sometimes, depending on which battalions were ready, I actually ended up with some of 4th Marines' battalions for exercises. So I had some of the 2d Marine Division battalions for exercises, just like 4th Marines might have had one of my battalions for their exercises, too. We interchanged battalions. So I saw the UDP from Hawaii, Pendleton, and Lejeune.

Allison: Any perspectives on the UDP program?

Zinni: Yes, it was a great program. The units came fully ready, fully manned up, didn't have personnel problems. Their training status was up. I think the biggest challenge was they came from another parent regiment. They're chopping to you, sometimes I saw it in Okinawa; we alienated them. I mean, when I got there, I watched how we—when the battalions came in, they got lectured to, warned about things, liberty. The poor battalion commanders looked like they were in a state of shock. They were ready to circle the wagons. I changed all that. I said, "When you come in, we've got to make them feel like they're part of the 9th Marines. I want them to feel like they're back

home. I want them to feel like they can do things, nobody's under the gun here." I didn't like this sort of finger in the face stuff, and so we changed that whole attitude. I wanted the battalion commanders to feel that this was their regiment. A lot of the regimental commanders didn't want off-island training unless the whole battalion went. I was looking for even company or platoon and get them off the island any way you can, because it can get boring and the training isn't that great. Like I said, take the regiment to the field, take the battalions to the field as much as possible, manage the liberty in a sane way. I mean, when I got there, they had a policy at Camp Hansen that every morning the blotter and log book on the gate was brought to the regimental commander and the battalion commanders had to stand in front of him while he went through it; wanted to know why PFC Jones came in at two o'clock in the morning. I didn't give a shit if PFC Jones came at two o'clock in the morning. If he's there for formation, he's ready to go. If you don't want him coming in at two o'clock in the morning, then change the liberty hours or something. I mean it was ridiculous. Every time there was an incident, the battalion commander was required to report to the regimental commander immediately. I said, "Handle it." If it's something really serious that I need to know about, the battalion commander could make that judgment. So we had to change all these rules that were just made to make the battalions feel unwelcome and under the gun and so we had to change that whole orientation and mind-set out there. Well, I wanted them to come in and say, "While you're here, you're part of the 9th Marines. You're welcome. It's important. We value you while you're here." So the whole socialization process and system I thought was flawed out there. And it created a we-they where the rotational battalions didn't feel like they

were a part of the units of the staff and the people that were there. So you had to change that mind-set. And it took a lot, because they were conditioned to that. I wrote letters back to the regimental commanders, the parent regiments, with every battalion that came through, what a good job they did and much appreciated. I stayed in communication with them. I knew all the regimental commanders back there and made sure if they had any issues we worked together on it.

Allison: General Christmas had one of the regiments out there, didn't he?

Zinni: He had the MEB when I was out there. He was the assistant division commander and 9th MEB commander when I was out there, and as part of 9th MEB, the RLT was under him.

Allison: I think—did General Krulak—future General Krulak, he had the 3d Marines at one point.

Zinni: Before.

Allison: That was before you were there?

Zinni: Yes.

Allison: He had brought his BLT out.

Zinni: I didn't know him until I became a general; I don't think I ever ran into him. I knew his brother really well, the chaplain. He was chaplain at the Basic School when I was instructor there. I knew him really well. I didn't know General Krulak at all until I became general. I don't think I ever ran into him.

Allison: Was morale a problem on Okinawa, to keep Marines focused, to keep their morale where it should be?

Zinni: I think it was tough in many ways. First of all, they're away from home; they're deployed. Secondly, they're in an environment with a lot of restrictions. They're constantly under the gun. There isn't the kind of quality training you can get elsewhere. It can be a good experience if they get a lot of off-island time, if they get into some of the exercises. They went to the Philippines to train. We used to send units out to Guam with the Special Forces to train. We tried to do a lot of morale-building things there in the camp, the things that the troops would find interesting.

Allison: MWR kind of stuff?

Zinni: MWR kind of stuff. Sometimes it was hard, because I fought like hell, for example, to get a bookstore up there. We tried to make the club system more responsive to their needs. Staff NCO club was very good. Enlisted club was sort of okay. Officer club was terrible. We really did a lot to enhance that, but there wasn't a lot of investment in there. I will say this for General Johnston, when he came in, he changed a lot of that and it became more responsive. Not that you want them there sucking down beers, but there's got to be a place, because they don't have anyplace else to let their hair down and not worry about what can happen off base. When they went off base, we tried a lot to encourage them to understand the community, what was going on, participate in community events, don't just go out and drink. There are 150 bars right outside of . . .

Allison: It's a big moneymaker.

Zinni: Yes, it's a big moneymaker, and it's expensive. Knock on wood, again, in the two-plus years I was there, again, there were no serious incidents. And, again, a lot of that had to do with the leadership, staff NCO, NCO leadership, junior officers who were really tuned in, cooperation with the city and the Bar Owner's Association, everybody else.

If they saw a potential problem brewing, they were quick to get us involved so that it didn't escalate, take a lot of pressure off the troops in terms of what they can do and where they can go, try to encourage them to go to constructive things, scuba dive and do other things. Once they get into that stuff, it's okay. It's getting them motivated to get into it and make it easy for them to get off base. There were all kinds of things that they could do.

Allison: It's so easy to just hang around the base.

Zinni: And I will say this, that I was seeing a different kind of Marine by then. By then, the all-volunteer force, the post-Vietnam sort of cleanup of the Corps and everything else that we talked about before, basically, by and large, you were seeing a different kind of [Marine]; you just saw it in little things. That's the reason I mentioned I wanted to get a bookstore. I was looking at the kind of things they were reading. I mean, this was the era of General Gray's reading list, the Commandant's reading list. They were reading those books. They were interested. One of my first days as a regimental commander, this thing crosses my desk where I've got to sign, requesting 1,000 feet of airspace over Camp Hansen for the weekend, and I said to my executive officer, "What is this?" And he said, "That's the model airplane club." And when I went out to watch it, here were all these Marines out there that had built these model airplanes, jets, helicopters, and they flew them around. So you're just seeing a different kind of person. When I'd go through the barracks, I'd look at the books they were reading. They were, like I said, off the Commandant's reading list, some of them way ranks above what you would normally expect them to read.

Allison: Taking classes, probably.

Zinni: Taking classes, again, going in for the scuba diving and other activities and immersing themselves in it. So you had to stay on top of it, but you needed to help support that, help them get to it. The combination of those kinds of activities, plus viable training, plus while they were out there, keeping them busy, like I said, getting them off the island, looking for every opportunity to get them somewhere else.

Allison: Training, good training.

Zinni: Training in a different environment, to see different places and all. Sometimes battalions didn't get as much as others, and it got a little tougher for them, but you constantly had to work on it and make it happen. I think overall the morale was good. I think certainly being away from home and at times it got boring for the troops in some respects, but they came as really tight units. They were up to speed. They had trained and worked up before they came out there. So you didn't have this, in and out of people, personnel changes, and that sort of thing.

Allison: Certainly not like your experience the first time you'd been in Okinawa, when you had the guard company there.

Zinni: Well, back then, it was one-year assignments, people coming and going, and you never knew what you had. And of course post-Vietnam era, a lot of people in the Marine Corps that shouldn't have been in the Marine Corps, the drug and racial incidents and problems that were still washing over, the Vietnam sort of cloud that they knew was back there in the States over what they were doing. It was a much more difficult time, not so much then. I mean it was much healthier. I would say morale was very good. I mean, it struck me it was very good. The facilities were improving, too, building new gyms and the kinds of things that encouraged that. I tried to encourage

intramural sports as much as possible, create competition between units so that there was something occupying them, but you had to work at all that. You had to constantly work at it and look for ideas and not assume anything.

Allison: This was a time—the Regan era, when more money is being pumped into the military, too. I remember that, that that had a tremendous impact on morale.

Zinni: Yes, we didn't want for much. Not like I saw right after Vietnam when the bucks were tight and I was taking as a company commander 14 troops to the field at Camp Lejeune. It was a lot different. The battalions were much healthier, and now you saw kicking in, too, the NCO leader development, the NCO schools, the academies, so the NCO staff, NCO caliber, was considerably better.

Allison: You had mentioned General Gray's reading list. Was he the instigator of that?

Zinni: Yes.

Allison: He started that.

Zinni: Yes, he started the Commandant's reading list, and then it was sort of parceled out by grade, and the reading list became a requirement. The other thing I began to notice, you know how you have somebody attend a mess night or an event and they give you a plaque or something like that. I was suddenly seeing people are giving each other books now. And there'd be an event, we'd have guest speakers or something like that, and people were giving books. I thought that was fantastic.

Allison: How important—you'd mentioned clubs. How much, how important is that, that informal interaction, setting like officers club happy hour or other type of informal interaction?

Zinni: It became important at a place like Okinawa, because they didn't go home. Now, I felt that I can't demand much of the club system if we're not making money, so you had to support the club system. Now, it was a little easier there because you had a captive audience. I ran my officers' school in the clubs. We'd do map exercises, we'd do officers' . . . I did twice a week officers' school. My sergeant major ran the staff NCO, NCO schools. We used the clubs for that. And also you could have a beer or soda while we're in there. So they're making money. We're doing the training there, too. You'd support the club system. Camp Hansen for the first time was making a lot of money. As a matter of fact, the clubs' manager at Smedley Butler told them we were keeping the whole island afloat in the money we were making. You bulletproof your people. Obviously, the bachelor officers and all is no problem. They're there. The married officers, like on the staff and all, if they stayed afterwards, my rule was if you have more than one drink you don't go home. And I would have rooms in the BOQ, and we'd do officers' school, and we'd do those things and afterwards have an officers' call. If they stayed around, they had to stay in a room. They didn't leave. And the same with the staff NCOs and all that, and I made sure their families knew that, that Wednesdays and Fridays we had these things and if they didn't want to stay afterward and didn't have more than one drink, they could be home, but nobody was going to be driving without that. So you do things to sort of bulletproof and make sure that people don't do something stupid and all that. We ran mess nights up there, too. We called them warrior mess nights and everybody's in their battle dress and paraded the beef and the ammo can, and you'd be privy to things like that. And they liked that,

because they're deployed and the unit's pretty tight and it becomes much more of a morale-booster thing than it might be back home.

Allison: Well, the Marine Corps was changing sort of socially. It seemed like it was less important that you go get tanked up on Friday night at happy hour and that kind of thing.

Zinni: Yes, there was a much different view on alcohol. It was "deglamorized" to a great extent. People were much more careful. The rules involving alcohol consumption were much tighter and harder, things like DUI and everything else, than it had been in the Marine Corps when I came in as a young officer. So when you did things and you had events where there was going to be alcohol, I think it was incumbent upon the commander to ensure that you put in place measures that didn't . . . like I said, I would open up the BOQ and make sure people had a room, no one was going to go outside the main gate. So they could enjoy themselves and be fine and nobody would do anything stupid. You'd just step in and make sure you had those measures in there if that happened. And it seemed to work. We didn't have any problems. And we would have staff NCO-officer joint events, too, which always worked out really well.

Allison: Bosses night and that kind of thing.

Zinni: Yes, bosses night at the staff NCO club, or at the officers club. We'd have the staff NCOs up there, too. And it was always—and I tried to gear those sessions to talking about the role of the staff NCO, the role of the officer and the staff NCO, and all that. I wrote a letter to all the staff NCOs, all the officers and staff NCOs in the regiment on the role of the staff NCOs. As a matter of fact, the staff NCOs used to read that letter [for training], on what's the difference between the role of the young officer and the

young staff NCO, particularly geared toward the sort of platoon commander, platoon sergeant level equivalent and other units, and units that maybe didn't have that kind of nomenclature. Because what I was finding was young officers were coming out, trying to be the platoon sergeant. When I first came into the Marine Corps, it was a clear distinction between the role of the staff NCO and the role of the officer. I think because of Vietnam and because a lot of staff NCOs were made temporary officers, promoted really fast, we didn't develop them. We had officers that felt they had to fill the void. And now that we were regenerating the same kind of superb leadership, I was looking at these staff NCOs who were fully capable. We didn't back off the officers, and a lot of times I heard complaints, "I have a great lieutenant, but he wants to be the platoon sergeant, as well as the platoon commander." And so I felt it was important for me to line out what those duties were and how you separate the two and how you work as a team, but you clearly delineate those duties. And so I would write that out, I would have classes on that, have discussions on that. The staff NCOs seemed to really appreciate that. As a matter of fact, my sergeant major, we had the sword of the regimental sergeant major, and, when I left, it was presented to me by the staff NCOs, the sergeant major's sword of the regiment [inaudible].

Allison: You had mentioned having officers' classes, but you also had NCO and staff . . .

Zinni: Yes. And part of the reason for doing officer school, beside the obvious reason of the officer education and all that, [was] the obligation to do that as a commander, and they understand you; you understand them. But part of it was to get the officers the hell out of the way so the staff NCOs had some time with the troops, because the officer is always there. Especially in a deployed unit, there's no place else for the officer to go. I

had an interesting thing happen. I had this young lieutenant come up to me. He said, “Sir, I have to tell you something.” He said, “When we first came here and you said there’s going to be two days a week of officers’ school, Wednesday afternoon and evening, Friday afternoon and evening, I said there’s no way we can make this happen. I’ve got to be with the platoon. I can’t leave them on their own.” And he says, “The first time you had an officers’ school, I didn’t even listen to what was going on, didn’t even pay attention.” And we used to do map exercises, all that other stuff. He said, “I was so focused on my platoon . . . “ He said, “When I got back to the barracks, I found that they had a field day at the barracks, there had been a weapons inspection, they [did] PT. My platoon sergeant did it all.” And he said, “I didn’t even realize he could do all that and everything, and I got new respect for him.” And so when I saw that—I happened to see that platoon sergeant at a staff and officers’ call, and he said, “Jeez, I want to thank you, sir.” He said, “I have a great lieutenant, but he tries to . . . “ He said, “You gave me an opportunity to show him I can do things, too, and we can have great relationships.” So some of that—and I had two great sergeant majors at that time out there and they were—they took it seriously. They ran that seriously and they ran a tight ship on the staff NCOs.

Allison: Sounds like those schools lasted quite a while. It was all of Friday and Wednesday afternoons and . . .

Zinni: Into the evenings. I mean, it was like about four hours and then . . .

Allison: You’d do map studies.

Zinni: We’d do map studies and war games. Sometimes we went actually out to the field and did terrain walks, and I would have the club bring beers out and stuff like that. They

were oriented around not just what you would do there. For example, I'd put out a homework assignment. I'd put out a . . . I made up these situations with maps and everything else. We printed them. They got them. They had to come ready to present their solutions. I could call on any officers; I loved calling on a battalion commander and putting them on the spot in front of their officers.

Allison: So you had the whole . . . you had all the officers from the whole regiment.

Zinni: All the officers, yes.

Allison: Quite a gathering.

Zinni: They liked going to school again. But it was great. I mean, sometimes like the chaplain would do the exercise and be tactical and want to present his thing. Then I had a great chaplain named Shields. He retired as a Navy captain. He's a great chaplain. He was out here, recently. On his Sunday homilies or sermons, he would relate it to the exercise, put it all in sort of morality lessons.

Allison: Make a theological connection.

Zinni: So it got to be pretty good. And I made all the officers and staff NCOs from every unit have a softball team or two and then we would play each other and all that on one day and had like sort of tournaments and things like that.

Allison: How important is the chaplain to maintaining that well-balanced morale in a unit?

Zinni: You know, chaplains run the spectrum. I mean, my time out there, if I had to pick one group that gave me the most trouble, it was chaplains. I mean, I had chaplains involved in stuff that was really bad, and I sort of saw the spectrum, where on the other end were these phenomenal chaplains that in their units they were respected and held in high esteem, [they] had the confidence of the commanders, were in the field,

with the troops, connected to them, really had the pulse of the unit, the confidence of the troops, a sense of where the units were. But more than any other group, they sort spanned the spectrum. To be honest with you, I think there were like three or four chaplains in the course of that that either had to be relieved or sent home.

Allison: Getting in trouble in one way or another.

Zinni: In one way or another, and then there was sort of the mediocre group. Then there were the really outstanding. I mean, the chaplains just show you that if you have a chaplain that's really into the unit . . . to me, it had nothing to do with denomination, or it had nothing to do with [theology]; the ones that took on the physical challenges of it and were out with the troops and shared the hardships, connected to them, related to them, really made a big difference. And there were others where battalion commanders would just shake their head and say, "My chaplain's not very useful to me."

Allison: That's interesting.

Zinni: But, at that time, I just saw this spectrum. I mean, it just seemed more than any other position in the unit they seemed to be so diverse in terms of quality. But the role can be significant. If you have a good chaplain, it makes a big difference.

Allison: As far as bolstering morale and being there and providing that.

Zinni: Boosting morale, having something outside the chain of command that an individual Marine, a sailor, can go to for counseling that builds trust, that usually comes from seeing that chaplain share the hardships with you, connect to you, have that sort of approachability and personal commitment I think becomes key.

Allison: Is there a spiritual connection there, between being a good warrior . . .

Zinni: I think everybody has a spiritual side. Some of that may be expressed in a religious context, or an organized religious context. Sometimes that spiritual side is not even maybe religious. It has to do with morale. It has to do with just whatever motivates you, and I think that's important. That's part of leadership, is making sure that just like the body and the mind are together, that whatever motivates an individual, that whatever spiritually motivates them, that that's in place for them and that's cultivated. But I also think that in all organizations there need to be outlets. There need to be ways people with issues and concerns and problems have a source that they can go to that's outside the chain of the command but built into the structure. I mean the chaplain fits that role. If I'm troubled by personal things or other things, I have an outlet. A chaplain that welcomes that is a great counselor that can be trusted, is respected and admired, that wears both his religious insignia and his grade insignia equally well. It's really valuable to the unit. Absent that, what do you have? There's no alternative to a chain of command, but maybe the chain of the command's the problem, at least in the perspective of the individual. Maybe it really is. Maybe it's a little bit intimidating and embarrassing to put it into the chain of command. So without that element, if you don't have an element that's trusted by the troops to be used like that, the chaplain, of course, it becomes even more difficult.

Allison: You really can't go to friends, necessarily. They can be part of the problem, a bad peer group.

Zinni: But friends aren't professional counselors. You don't get the best advice by going to a buddy who's not much more mature or experienced than you are in handling it. Like I said, what the chaplain brings, besides being outside [your close group], is he's a

professional counselor, or she, knows their business and knows how to resolve issues or help resolve issues and can work the chain of command. When I was a battalion commander, my chaplain would come to me and say, “We have an issue. We have a Marine that has a problem.” He doesn’t have to identify the Marine to me, but if he needs help from within the chain of command and some degree of authority he can have . . . for example, he might say, “I need to be able to ensure this Marine gets a little time off to do something. Inside the chain of command, they may not understand it and I just need your okay.” Well, you can do things like that. You have the trust in your chaplain to know he’s making the right decisions, he’s helping this Marine, he’s going to make him a productive Marine again and give him a little bit of faith. And the company commanders and the others trust him too and say, if PFC Jones . . . or if PFC Jones is anonymous and you’re working with him and you need some okay to do something, I trust you. So the trust has to come from the command and it has to come from the individual, and the chaplain has to build that trust. It doesn’t come automatically.

Allison: It’s not automatic.

Zinni: Yes.

Allison: Okay, sir. I’m through this set of questions.

End of Session VI

UNITED STATES MARINE CORPS HISTORY DIVISION
Oral History Interview

Interviewee: General Anthony C. Zinni
Date: 3 August 2007
Length: 01:49:29
Interviewer: Dr. Fred Allison

SESSION VII

Allison: This is an oral history recording with General Tony Zinni on the 3d of August 2007, done at the Marine Corps Base in Quantico, by Fred Allison. In July 1989, you came back to Quantico and became the chief of staff for the Training and Education Center at Quantico. And this was sort of a new setup. This was General Gray's adaptation, or big change. First of all, you were—along the way, you were selected to brigadier general, too. How did these events transpire?

Zinni: Well, I was short-toured out of Okinawa. I had another year. I was supposed to be the MEF G-3, which I was looking forward to, and General Gray said, "No, you're coming back to be chief of staff at the T&E Center, Training and Education Center." He had now restructured Quantico. We had the T&E Center stood up, and I think he was looking for people back here that understood what he was trying to do, get these organizations off the ground. General [Paul K.] Van Riper was president of the new Marine Corps University at that time. So all these new commands, all these new relationships and new concepts about how he wanted to do business were in place. So I came back for the year, worked for General [Matthew P.] Caulfield, who was at that time commanding T&E, in 1989. Then, in the fall is when they announced the selection to brigadier general, and to my shock and surprise I got on the list.

Allison: That must have been really a momentous event. I mean that's a pretty big deal.

Zinni: I mean, what's amazing, we hear it all the time about you could take those who were selected and erase them and take the next group and not lose a beat and even the next group after that and not lose a beat. I think one of the things that struck me—first of all, it's the obvious honor and humbling experience of that, because in the Marine Corps, obviously, that's a difficult cut. But when I looked at some friends and contemporaries and people that I respected, peers of mine that didn't make it, it even made me feel that in some respects, made it more special, and in other respects, I thought a lot has to do with just luck. I mean, luck maybe in the experiences you happen to have.

Allison: Being at the right place in the right time.

Zinni: And there were certainly people of my vintage that should have been on those lists that weren't. I guess it's the function of numbers.

Allison: What was interesting about your career, it seemed like you really hadn't tried to game your career as far as getting promoted. You were just interested in being in command. Companies, you had five companies and then the regiment and just involved in operations.

Zinni: Yes, actually, six companies. I mean, there were two loves I had, one of them being the operating forces, what we call the Fleet Marine Forces, and being out there and, when you couldn't be there, I really liked the training and education side. So I ended up—where I could influence it, I really liked coming back to Quantico, for example, and teaching the Basic School, Command and Staff College, the T&E Center. And even in the Fleet Marine Force, like when I had the Infantry Training Center down at

2d Marine Division. So the training and the education piece always really fascinated me, and I spent a lot of time in that business, beside the operational time, and I guess in some ways was fortunate enough to dodge the things like recruiting and Marine Corps barracks and everything else that my peers were doing, not by design. I mean, that was my preference, certainly, but it always seemed that's where I got pigeonholed, but I liked it.

Allison: Becoming a brigadier general, is that a big change? I mean do you go into a different environment at that point?

Zinni: Yes, you do in a lot of ways. You now have an aide, depending on the job you have, or an assistant of some sort. Obviously, there are all sorts of things that go with that, the kinds of perks and things. You get a nice parking space at the PX.

Allison: That's right! *[laughter]*

Zinni: The people that I've known that have been through it, certainly maybe it's just a function of the kinds of jobs that I ended up in, it didn't seem to be as big a change as maybe a three or a four star, because then you really begin to see a difference, not only a difference in the way people treat you and everything else, a difference in the way you have this entourage that's always around you. And, surprisingly enough, you don't control your own life. You find more and more as you go through the general officer ranks, you have less control over your own life. You are driven by a schedule. You look at all the trappings that go with this, I mean, enlisted aides, officer aides, executive assistants, drivers and, eventually at CentCom [Central Command]. I had security people, communicators. You had to be in 24-hours secure communication with the White House and the Pentagon and all that stuff. And you have these

schedules that drive you and you personally cannot influence it. There are things you just have to do. You're driven. You're like the queen bee in the hive. You may be catered to, but you've got to produce eggs constantly. So those trappings look like, wow, that must be a great life, but it's a grueling life.

Allison: There's a reason.

Zinni: And the reason for all that is because they expect your total attention and commitment, and if you try to resist that, you're not going to be effective, and you're driven along. Not so much at brigadier, but as . . .

Allison: As you get up into three. What were your thoughts on the changes here at Quantico, the creation of Marine Corps University and the Training and Education Command?

Zinni: I mean, of course, I watched all of this grow. I understood what General Gray was trying to do. I knew him when I was a captain and he was a lieutenant colonel. I knew how he thought. I knew what the intent was in all this. He really felt strongly about a need for emphasis on education, more creativity and standardization in training. He was a big believer in developing leaders, officers, and NCOs. He wanted a more professional, more structured NCO education, staff NCO education. He wanted to ensure that the officers looked at education as a critical part of their development. He wanted the quality of education to move to a much higher plane. Obviously, he was big on concepts and doctrine. He wanted to formalize that more. He saw Quantico as sort of the heart of the Marine Corps, and he needed to do that. I don't think that may have been shared by everybody, but he certainly saw it that way. And this structure was designed to sort of create this kind of center of excellence here in so many respects: training, education, doctrine, and to influence the Marine Corps more widely

and move it to another plane. And it was kind of the culmination of something he was very interested in. It was, for lack of a better term, I call it the sort [of] renaissance in the operational art that we were going through. We had maneuver warfare, the maneuverists that were coming out of the Vietnam mentality, rethinking how we do business and how we fight, looking at a world that had changed so much and the conflicts that now became much more complex. So I think that this was the way that General Gray saw to influence it. Unfortunately, there were not a lot of General Grays around. I think there were a lot of people that didn't understand what he was trying to do, a lot of leaders that didn't have that kind of grasp, and maybe what they tried to do didn't—Quantico went through the throes after he left of up and down. We had a period of time when there was emphasis down here on the requirements and concepts-driven requirement system, and then it was pulled back up to Headquarters Marine Corps. It always seemed to be a battle between the theorists, or the conceptualizers, and the bureaucrats, and that kind of . . .

Allison: Is it in Headquarters Marine Corps?

Zinni: Well, in the leadership of the Marine Corps. It just always seemed to be that you have people who think in conceptual terms and then you have people who think more in process terms and political terms. I've seen this go back and forth. It depends on the style. General Gray's ideas, a lot of them held. I think he did a lot for the education system. I think he did a lot for structuring not only the officer but the much-needed staff NCO and officers' education system and formalized it there. It was a great move; a lot more emphasis on thinking and on approaching what we do for a living, the operational art, in a more conceptual way, as opposed to a prescriptive or automatic

way. But some of that, I think, is getting lost today. We're slipping back into some of the process-oriented work and political-oriented work and there's not enough emphasis on that.

Allison: Was this reactive to what Gray wanted to do?

Zinni: I've got to be honest. I look back at some of my peers and Paul Van Riper and a number of others that were part of that, this with a much more thoughtful, creative, intellectual way, and I'm wondering what happened to all of that. You and I were talking about the recently held Boyd Conference down here, and the only three general officers there were the three retired guys, General Gray, myself, and General Van Riper. I didn't see any active-duty Marine Corps general officers, and that may say something. And I think back to the time that General Gray was Commandant, when we were all on active duty. You probably would have seen a half-dozen in there, in something like that.

The world moves so fast today. There's so much information that's accessible. You have to process information very quickly. You have to make decisions very quickly. You have to analyze what you confront very quickly and thoroughly. It takes a different kind of leader and it takes one that is mentally agile and has the experience and the educational background developed to do that. If you don't, you're going to get lost. I see that now in business. I see it in the academic world. I see it in the diplomatic world, and I see it in the military world. I've experienced all four of those in the last seven, eight years and [consider] how we're going to create leaders that think. I look at this war we're involved in now in Iraq. We're now into the fifth year. We don't understand what we're involved in, how to adapt to the environment you find yourself

in; it either crushes you or you survive in it or you thrive in it or you learn to master it. And so you're going to be in one of those four positions. Highly successful leaders and organizations end up mastering it, whether it's in business, in a military conflict or whatever. Some less than that may be able to thrive and do well. They don't master it, but they are able to do better than to survive. Some survive and maybe barely survive and get through it, and then others are crushed by the environment, because they don't understand it, they don't know how to deal with it, they're not prepared for it. And I think that applies to the military or anywhere else. Are you going to be a master of your environment? Are you going to just struggle to keep your head above water or is it going to defeat you? I just think that the emphasis on thinking and conceptualizing is waning. I mean we've seen they've hit the high watermark at some point, and it seems to be not as prevalent amongst the leaders as I've seen in the past in the Corps.

Allison: It's ironic that it is General Gray that's bringing this in—the thinking and conceptualizing, because he's always sort of stereotyped as a Marine's Marine, a knuckle-dragging, slug-it-out kind of a Marine.

Zinni: No, I mean, I don't think they're contradictory. He communicated—he's charismatic. He communicated to every rank and every grade in the Marine Corps effectively. He understood them all effectively. I don't think that emphasis on education and intellect and the ability to conceptualize necessarily makes you a nerd and unable to lead or to communicate effectively to the ranks. To me, they're not mutually exclusive. It probably takes a rare talent to be able to do both, but he embodied it.

Allison: It seems like in the Marine Corps there's this sort of anti-intellectualism. It's more like in TBS and OCS, officers are taught to react quickly instead of in a thoughtful way.

Would you say that in the Marine Corps traditionally there's an anti-intellectualism?

Zinni: Well, I think that that may have been true at one time. And, for example, I know that the Marine Corps put less emphasis, for example, on advanced degrees in their officers. I think that's another thing that turned around when General Gray came in. Education wasn't something you hid. But I think in many ways, because most of my general officer time is in the joint world, and I know in the joint world, I've had senior officers from the other services that always would tell me that they seek to get a Marine in their organization or get Marines in their organization. They like Marines, not only because they have the discipline and the work ethic and all that but they're innovative. They're thinkers and they bring something that—they are less narrowly focused than others, [they think or work] outside of their branch or occupational specialty and that's where they tend to see Marines, with a much broader perspective on things. So a lot of that may be more myth than anything else.

Allison: Okay, sir. So you're doing that here. What were some of your important challenges that you faced while you were chief of staff. It was only a short time.

Zinni: Yes, it was a very short time.

Allison: Do you have anything that stands out in your mind?

Zinni: No. We were trying to develop Marine Corps standards for training, the MCCRES [Marine Corps Combat Readiness Evaluation System] standards. We have the individual training standards and I think the biggest difficulty or challenge, I guess the best way to say it, is to get people to work, to adopt this sort of standardization.

There's a resistance to that. I mean the Marines have always been kind of free spirits.

They're not as bound up by standards as, say, the Army and others in training. And for us to try to get more standardization, there seemed to be resistance to that.

Allison: Pushback.

Zinni: Yes, pushback on that. And I think there has to be a balance. If you overstandardize and it becomes too prescriptive, it can become a problem. You certainly don't want to take away initiative, but I think you don't want a lot of loosey-goosey-ness that if you go from unit to unit, from battalion to battalion, or squadron to squadron, you see differences in training, which ends up with differences in capability. There has to be some at least foundation or basis. And I think at that point in time that was the biggest challenge we faced. We obviously oversaw the education piece, but, again, that came under the university, and we had Paul Van Riper here, and he was doing a magnificent job as the first president and really pulling the university together. I think there were a lot of people that were kind of rolling back their eyes when they heard Marine Corps University, that it was some kind of . . .

Allison: Oxymoron.

Zinni: Yes, but now it's accepted. We obviously have the second-year course, our own war college, MCWAR [Marine Corps War College], and SAW [School of Advanced Warfighting] and all these things that were the ideas that came out of that and developed to be on a plane with other services is, but again those were things we dealt with, but, again, it was a very short time.

Allison: Is that the significance of TECOM [Training and Education Command] to the Marine Corps—the standardization, training standards that have been established.

Zinni: I think the standardization, the structure of the training and education of individuals and standardization of our unit training, the management of our training system. We were—if you're a Manpower person, you understand that T2P2 [transients, transfers, prisoners, patients], the time lost to training, transit, the nonproductive time when you're moving people around or when they're in a training pipeline and all this. These are lost man-days, and so part of our structure, too, was to try to get better systems in place so we shorten those. One of the biggest problems, for example, was pilot training. You take a young lieutenant out of TBS and he gets in the training pipeline. All sorts of things can hold him up: availability of airplanes, whether the next class is starting. So a lot of those things were management problems and systemic problems that had to be developed. So T&E gave us more focus and allowed us to shorten those man-days lost in what's called the T2P2 pipeline, what's become really nonproductive time. So there was a management function in all this. too, a standardization, especially in the unit and the individual skills that we can measure better, development of education and formalizing it, especially, I think, for the NCO. Staff NCOs didn't have anything at all—and then certainly improving and increasing the officer one and adding on those things. So that was the thrust there at T&E, sort of capturing most of that.

Allison: Is that when they started bringing in the professors here?

Zinni: Yes, we had adjunct faculty. Well, it was an adjunct faculty before, but it became much more robust and much more, I think, significant, as part of that, too. And, again, it started with the university and Paul Van Riper and the other two.

Allison: Kind of get up on the level with the Navy and the Army, as far as their staff colleges?

Zinni: Yes, and the creation of the War College and our own second-year course. I think they wanted to do more emphasis on things that broadened officer education beyond just the tactical and the operational, but the strategic and thinking in terms of political, economic, cultural dimensions, too, because all of that's part of how you deal with conflict.

Allison: More and more, which is what you were talking about earlier, not adapting to an environment, but learning to master that environment. The capstone course you took, you went to Europe on that.

Zinni: Yes, after being selected for brigadier general, then Major General Jack Sheehan was the Manpower ...

Allison: An old friend.

Zinni: He's an old friend. And he called me and said, "Look, you've got to get a joint tour." I didn't have a joint tour . . .

Allison: This was anathema, wasn't it? In those days.

Zinni: Well, it's interesting, because there was a little bit of a period there where you could get a waiver for selection to general officer without a joint tour, but you had to get a joint tour right away. Because not too many—maybe the year after me or at least definitely the two years after me. There no longer could be a waiver. You couldn't be selected without a joint tour. So I just got in that bubble. So he felt strongly that it was important to get a joint tour. Of course, to me, like any Marine, you're anxious to get back to the fleet or do something like that. So he said, "No. Joint tour," and he really felt that the best joint tour we had for brigadier generals was the deputy J-3, deputy director of operations for the European Command, which was a Marine billet at that

time and had been for a long time, for a Marine brigadier. And he felt strongly that's where I should go. Of course, being a new general, you go where they tell you to go and that sounded interesting and certainly, being in operations, that sounded great. So I attended the capstone course that all one stars attended, and since I was going to Europe, they try to send you on a trip that's oriented toward your future assignment. So there were a number of us who went to Europe. Now, these were interesting times, because this was when the wall was coming down. So we arrive in Europe when Gorbachev had thrown in the towel.

So we're going around to get our briefings at EuCom [European Command] and the components and everything, and they have no clue. I mean all the briefings they used to give are now meaningless. And two things stuck in my mind. One is, we landed in Berlin, and the Army had a unit called the Berlin Brigade in Berlin, and they didn't know what to do with us, because everything was coming apart. And they sort of handed us off to some second lieutenant that was our escort. There were about four or five of us one stars. And he said, "How would you guys like to go into East Berlin?" We said, "Can we do that?" He said, "I don't know. No one knows what the rules are anymore." So he piled us into this Volkswagen van and we drove through Checkpoint Charlie.

Allison: Just waved through?

Zinni: There was nobody there. Checkpoint Charlie was abandoned. We drive through the wall. We were driving around East Berlin. And it was a real shock to me, because I'm looking; here is East Berlin and we're just driving through. And then, of course, it was like morphing into another world, another time period, because you see these '50s

vintage bicycles, these Trabi cars that they make in East Germany, belching smoke. We just came from West Berlin, where we had Audis and BMWs and Mercedes and modern life. The main street was a façade. When you went off the back roads, you still saw bullet holes from World War II in the buildings. We drove into a Russian military garrison and they didn't know whether to shoot or salute us, and walked around. They looked like zombies, like they had no clue what was happening. We came out of there and I was struck by, jeez, this is 50 years we've been in this Cold War and it ended? Is this really happening? Is this temporary? Is this going to all snap back? We went down to Heidelberg and our next briefing was with the Army down there, U.S. Army Europe, and the chief of staff brought us in, a big guy, they nicknamed the Bear. [William M.] Burleson was his name, Major General Burleson, and we're asking him all these questions that are sort of Cold War kinds of questions, and he kept saying to us, "It's over. It's over. Don't you guys get it? It's over." And I thought, jeez, here all of a sudden. I mean this was a way of life. Here were Army guys who spent their entire careers in Europe, and the Army in Europe and Reforger exercises and the Fulda Gap and Air-Land Battle Concept. Everything that for half a century drove what the military was all about had just ended. Nothing. And so when I wandered around we went through these briefings, it was clear nobody knew what this all meant and what was going to happen. This was suddenly the balloon deflated. There wasn't a war. There wasn't a conflict. It collapsed. And we were hearing, the president, President Bush then, saying a new world order, peace dividend. So when I went to EuCom and I got there, they were trying to understand this new world order and what it meant. And we had an unbelievably fantastic commander in chief in the European Command in

SACEur [Supreme Allied Commander, Europe] General Jack Galvin, a real soldier statesman, in the mold of a marshall. And what he was saying is we had better be careful. All this euphoria and everything else, this world may be changing, but it may not be changing the way we think. I mean, it seemed that the attitudes by political leaders were a big sigh of relief. Doomsday clock gets set back. We can relax. We can let our guard down with all this defense spending. And I thought, do all these things we have to do. We'll pull the plug, reduce the Army and the military presence in Europe. And he was saying, "Yeah, there should be a reduction, but be careful. Let's think through what should remain here, what the future's like. Let's think this through." And nobody was listening to him. It was in free fall, and he was saying, "We need to connect to our former enemies. We need to communicate with them. We need to bring them in the fold. This is not going to be peaceful. It's going to release a lot of problems that were underneath the surface or maybe contained by this kind of bipolar world." And, of course, he was right. I was fortunate enough—he wanted to connect to the Russian military, the former Soviet military, and so I did a lot of work with the Eastern European military. We were building a program to connect to them. So I went to Poland, Hungary, Romania, working a lot with them. And then he sent a delegation of NATO generals to Russia, and we started this program of communicating and connecting to the Russian military and got into these discussions and seminars on how the military functions in a democracy. And so myself and the deputy—the DCINC, the deputy commander in chief of the European Command, four-star Air Force general named Jim McCarthy, said he and I were on these things. And I really enjoyed that, so I spent a lot of time in Russia, went to these conferences and

seminars with the senior leadership of the Russian military, from Marshal Shaposhnikov on down. We'd go out to these Russian conference centers and stay there. I had a Russian aide, a cadet from the propaganda core named Vlad that was like my escort and aide. And we would get into all these discussions about not only how the military functions in a democracy, building better military-to-military relationships, really getting insights into how they were thinking, to ensure that they weren't thinking about taking some action to try to snap things back or where they were going. General Galvin wanted us to ensure that this was not like victor and vanquished, that we were there to say, "Hey, the winners in this are the Russian people, or the former Soviet Union and the people. This wasn't a military victory/defeat. We need to work together now in this new world." And so that was one of the things I immediately got immersed in and I really liked.

Then I was, as the deputy director of operations, working for Admiral [Leighton W.] "Snuffy" Smith, who is a great, great boss. I really liked him. He wanted me to get out and really get to see all the components. He says, "You know the Navy and Marine Corps. Really get out to see the Army and the Air Force, the U.S. Air Forces in Europe and USAFE [U.S. Air Forces, Europe] and U.S. Army Europe, USAREUR." I got to their training centers and went out to their commands and to get my feet on the ground. Also, one of my responsibilities was running the battle staff, or the crisis action team. Now, EuCom rarely had these kind of things. They may pop up once in a great while. The day I arrived at EuCom, the crisis action team was formed because we had a noncombatant evacuation operation beginning in Liberia.

Allison: [Operation] Sharp Edge.

Zinni: Sharp Edge, and we were overseeing that. From the time I arrived in European Command the first day, until the day I left, the crisis action team of the battle staff was in being the whole time.

Allison: The whole time—had that not been the case beforehand?

Zinni: No, I mean it was—actually, it was a big strain on the staff, because you take it out of hide. So besides me, running off to all these operations and things that I was doing, I was also in charge of making sure that I was the director of the battle staff. And we had the battle staff for the Gulf War. We were going to have battle staff for the work with the Kurds, battle staff for the Balkans when Bosnia and the Balkans blew up, battle staff for three NEOs [noncombatant evacuation operations] in Africa. Everything was blowing up. We did this Provide Hope operation in the former Soviet Union, and this was crazy. We were putting the Patriots in Israel. So my entire time was spent running the battle staff, 24/7, and going out on these operations. So we were working these operations. We did humanitarian relief into the Balkans, as they were coming apart. We were running these NEOs out of Africa. Then the Gulf War, it looked like we were going to go in and Saddam wasn't leaving Kuwait. The Air Force in Europe came up with a scheme to run air attacks out of Turkey into northern Iraq. Operation Proven Force.

We built a plan for some special operations missions out of there. So we built a plan, brought it to General [Norman] Schwarzkopf at CentCom. They liked it, and so we basically were going to run operations out of the north. I went down and flew some missions in Proven Force, bombing missions on B-52s. I was down with our Special Operations Europe and some of their operations, too. So I was down in Proven Force

and got to get that experience, which taught me a lot about the air piece and the air planning and then the SOF [special operations forces] planning and all that, and to be part of that, too, and actually go on some missions. And then we had the aftermath with the Kurds.

Allison: [Operation] Provide Comfort.

Zinni: Provide Comfort, and so when that flared up, we had to get down there, which looked like a short-term humanitarian relief operation. I was sent down to be the deputy commander of it, and we thought it would last a couple of weeks, and I was down there for seven months. And I was the deputy commander, and then when we had a ground component and went into northern Iraq, I became the chief of staff, as General [John M. D.] Shalikashvili came down and the commander, General Jim Jamerson, Air Force, bumped to deputy. I bumped to chief of staff. Then, when “Shali” [Shalikashvili] left and the ground piece left, we bumped back up. So I went to the air piece, which was basically in the beginning, the humanitarian airlift. We’re doing airdrops with heavy-lift helicopters, and there was a big humanitarian relief operation in the hills of Turkey and in northern Iraq. Then we did the ground piece. We went into Iraq. We had 13 nations there in the Coalition and set up a security zone, brought the Kurds back home, continued the air cover. Then, when the Kurds—or when the ground forces withdrew and we went back to all air cover to protect the security zones, started the no-fly zones, then it was back into a pure air operation. And I had to go out and fly with some of the pilots. We had two-seater F-16s brought down because now it was all air decisions and air rules of engagement and General Jamerson said, you’re not a pilot but you’ve got to make these decisions when I’m not here, because he

would get called up to Ankara or whatever. So now I had to become—fortunately, we, as Marine officers, we certainly understand the basic understanding of air, but now you add these technical rules of engagement, and so he wanted me to understand what's in the pilot's head. So I had to go up and fly some missions. And then we had a carrier, too. So I had to fly some carrier missions, so I went with some of the A-6s, doing traps and cat shots and going out and low-level flying, then into the area and then in the F-16s, doing that. So I got my sort of indoctrination into air planning and air power and air rules of engagement and all that from the cockpit all the way back into the air operations center that we were running.

Allison: That must have been really an adventure there.

Zinni: Yes, and I came back from that, after seven months down there and those operations, and of course with the Kurds and dealing with the Iraqis and the Iraqi military. We had a military coordination center to make sure they understood—basically, we dictated what they had to do. Before that, in the Proven Force piece, when we put the Patriot missiles in Israel, when they were being “scudded,” I had to go down there. I was the only general that was sent down to Israel with the Patriot batteries. The Israelis were not happy about not being able to attack. We were telling them, “Don’t get involved in this and screw it up.” They were really angry, and I kind of had to go around and try to hold their hand, make sure our Patriot guys were taken care of. We had a great commander down there, that Army colonel that had the Patriot units, and we had an Israeli Patriot battery that was just being trained up. We had a Dutch battery. We had I think three or four American batteries. So I spent a lot of time down there. I was there when the war ended, got thrown out by the ambassador.

Allison: What a place to be when the war ended, right?

Zinni: Yes, I was in Jerusalem when it ended, and I was told by the ambassador I was not allowed to go into Jerusalem, and I went into the Old City and got caught. The war ended, I was drinking coffee out on the street.

Allison: In uniform?

Zinni: In uniform, and of course CNN and everybody else says the war ended. I hear this rumbling, everybody comes out and there I am on the camera. So the ambassador threw me out.

Allison: You were thrown out of Israel?

Zinni: I was PNGed [persona non grata] by the ambassador, by our ambassador, because he didn't want me to go to Jerusalem. So, here we had—I launch into these NEO operations in Africa. We did Sierra Leone, Liberia, Zaire. We have this humanitarian relief operation in the Balkans as that starts to come apart, and we're running operations down in the Balkans. We were running these airlift operations into Lebanon.

Allison: Lebanon. The air bridge.

Zinni: Yes, the air bridge, and then we got thrust into these programs in Eastern Europe and Russia that we were running. I was participating again and the war kicks off. The air and special operations missions, Proven Force, and then the Patriot Defender, putting them in there and going down into Israel and then Provide Comfort after that with the Kurds. So, when that ended, it looked like, well, maybe things are going to calm down. I come back and we now have Ambassador Rich Armitage, Secretary of State [James] Baker wants to start this program, like a Marshall Plan for the former Soviet

Union. So now we run this Operation Provide Hope, and I get sent up to work with Rich Armitage and we run an operation out of Ramstein Air Force Base where we're doing airlift of some of our Cold War stocks that we had in places in Pirna, [Germany], where you had medical supplies and medicines and blankets and things. So we now do this sort of goodwill humanitarian lift to all the 12 republics of the former Soviet Union, giving this stuff to orphanages and all this, and we are now working this program where we're bringing in people to teach international auditing standards to the Russians, trying to work with them to convince them to make their ruble a convertible monetary system. We're working military to military. So now I'm engaged in the political and the economic piece of this, too, Provide Comfort. I actually end up with an office back in Washington at the State Department with Rich Armitage. So I'm traveling back and forth from Europe, although still based there, running the military support for what he was doing. They go in with Rich Armitage to these former Soviet Republics and working the coordination and trying to generate Western European, Japanese, and other support for some sort of program, like a Marshall Plan.

Allison: Like a Marshall Plan—how did that work out?

Zinni: Yes, it never really blossomed in the way we envisioned it. There just wasn't that much interest in the international community for that, which I thought was important, but we did make some great inroads and I think demonstrated that, at least from the West and the U.S., we wanted to connect. So that consumed me for a number of months in my time there.

Allison: Right before you left.

Zinni: Yes, so I was all over the map out there.

Allison: So you show up out there, you're thinking, this is peacetime.

Zinni: I thought I was going to go over, you're going to eat sausages and drink beer, and I was never around.

Allison: Yes, which I guess that kind of hints that we're moving to a different paradigm here in the world.

Zinni: Well, I left there really convinced that we didn't understand what was going on. The world was changing, and we didn't understand. Now you have—people are beginning to move around now like they never could before. You can see these migrations happening, Eastern Europeans, people from Africa and elsewhere, coming into Europe. You're seeing globalization. I mean, first in the business world, economic world, the rise of the information age. I mean all of these things are beginning to happen. It seemed like the fall of the Soviet Union popped all these things up. And the thing that struck me, being a part of this, and now seeing it not only from the security end, and this isn't a peace dividend. We're having all these things happen. But also seeing the economic changes, the political changes, some of the cultural clashes, ethnic and religious rivalries now that are beginning to come up, the sort of diasporas and migrations, and also beginning to see other things are coming into effect, that now we have nations becoming more industrialized, people moving more toward the cities, this growing urbanization that's happening as this movement happens, the destruction of the environment, seeing people cut down rain forests and these industrial practices that are polluting water sources. And I'm watching all this, and I'm saying this is a whole new world and it isn't the big, automatic peace dividend, new world order. It's

a new world disorder, and in the meantime I'm watching the Army and the Air Force especially, the forces in Europe, in free fall. I mean, one day at European Command headquarters, 26 lieutenant colonels, Army lieutenant colonels, get their walking papers because they had these big reductions in force.

Allison: Really?

Zinni: Twenty colonels go and you're watching NCOs, that they have to just—they're 15 years into their careers, they want to stay in and, boom, they're cut. You're watching the units being cut. And I'm listening to General Galvin who is, again, great deal of respect for him. He was there when we did all the planning for all this stuff and learned a lot about planning joint operations, about how to think through the nonmilitary dimensions of this, again, the political, the economic and all these things, having the experience with Provide Comfort for the first time, working with NGOs [nongovernmental agencies]. We had 60 of them down there.

Allison: Was that your first experience with NGOs?

Zinni: That was my first experience with NGOs and the United Nations, working with the United Nations and then working with the embassy down there. They provided us a political liaison team. I knew the political advisor at EuCom. We had our own political advisor, a PolAd [political advisor], down in some of these joint task force operations. And this jointness now was relatively new, and we were pioneering the work in JTFs and combined task force, JTFs, and CTFs and structuring them. And, as a matter of fact, Galvin wanted me to capture a lot of this. He said, this is the way we're going to be operating and I really want you to start writing stuff, because there is no joint doctrine on this. And so we were beginning now to write a lot of the initial stuff out of

there from our experiences on JTF operations. We were experiencing with component-
cy and how that works. We'd taken some of the lessons out of the Gulf War from
CentCom, but we were looking at different designs on components and on service
components, functional components, embedded components, subordinate joint task
force, and coming up with these ideas. So at the same time there was no joint doctrine
like this, we were actually developing and writing a lot of joint doctrine in this area,
too.

Allison: Was it maintained?

Zinni: Yes, it was. He wanted to get a lot of it back to the doctrine centers. He wanted to
capture a lot for our own internal activities and SOPs and that sort of thing out there.
We ran a number of sessions with our senior officers on joint operations. Since I had
the most experience on all these things, because I not only ran it from the Unified
Command end and the battle staff end and the planning end, but then I went out and
participated in these. He wanted me to write a lot of that and develop it.

Allison: And I think it's interesting, you were doing it on the ground. I mean doing it back at
headquarters then you go out and do it operationally and even fly.

Zinni: Yes. Yes, and I went on operations. For example, with the French forces in northern
Iraq, when we went in, I patrolled with the French Foreign Legion out into the
hinterlands. We had the Kurdish guides in the Foreign Legion. I went out with the
Royal Marines, our own units, as a matter of fact.

Allison: Marines.

Zinni: Then-Colonel Jim Jones was the MEU commander. We had a Marine expeditionary
unit. We had other Marine units in there. We had Marine logistics units that came in.

What was really interesting was that our logistics command in the Provide Comfort was an Army brigadier that was the deputy theater logistics component commander in Europe. And when the [word] came down, he said, "I want a Marine logistics unit here."

Allison: Was that FSSG [force service support group] or something?

Zinni: No, we had to set up this distribution system and this network, and when you added all these little nodes out there, they're like little logistics bases that we had to put out in northern Iraq and rugged areas out in southwest Turkey. And he said, "Marines know how to do this." He says, "The Marines come and they have these small dets and they could package up everything we need." And so we could package up dets and components and these forward logistics bases and this kind of spoke and hub, where the Army logistics system would be the main part of it. What he needed [logistics] out there in the forward edge, if you kind of think of this as kind of a spoke and hub. He wanted these Marine detachments going to these forward logistics bases.

So we came back, and of course I MEF and II MEF were just recovering from the war and coming back. So we went out to III MEF at Okinawa, and their force service support group, they formed a logistics MAGTF [Marine air-ground task force]. They had military police as sort of the ground component. They had detachments from all the logistics elements in the FSSG, and then they had some air traffic controllers that were the air component, so it was an interesting little special-purpose MAGTF that went out [under] a colonel. They put in these nodes and these bases out there, and, again, it showed the flexibility of the Marine Corps and kind of a unique MAGTF, as sort of a logistics special-purpose MAGTF.

Allison: Do you remember the colonel that was running that?

Zinni: No, I can't. The monograph [written by the History Division] will have it. So we had that special-purpose MAGTF, we had the MEU in there, and we had other Marines that were involved in other areas. It was an interesting construct. It was not a traditional kind of joint task force, let alone Marine structure.

Allison: The joint task force or combined coalition task force, that was a new concept . . .

Zinni: Yes, those were the first really—since Goldwater-Nichols, the first real application, and we were doing one after another after another. And what we began to find is dependent on the missions the structures were all different. The component structures were different. The way we were shaping them to man relationships and then we had the combined piece of this, too, because we had all these other forces. Then we had relationships with the NGOs that were all new and this is where we developed the CMOC concept.

Allison: Civil-military operations. That's where that was developed?

Zinni: That's where it was developed, using the CMOC, which was designed to be a civil affairs kind of command structure. Now we're using it as a bridge to the NGOs. And this was a concept that two young civil affairs officers we had at EuCom that came in—when we were down there, they recommended doing this.

Allison: A couple of Army guys?

Zinni: Yes, two Army. And then we got down there, we had a Marine Reserve colonel civil affairs guy that worked on it, too, so that the whole CMOC concept was born out of that operation, too. And we were capturing a lot of this. General Galvin said, "We can't lose this, because this is not going to be an aberration. We're going to do these

kinds of operations again. We've got to capture this idea. And of course, for a lot of the traditionalists from all the services, this was hard stuff.

Allison: This isn't fighting.

Zinni: Well, it is. Some of it was fighting, but fighting wasn't the only piece of this, and sometimes not the significant piece. It was not the central point of what we were doing. So all this stuff now, humanitarian operations, the peacekeeping operations, the sort of security missions that we were getting, these bridges into the former Soviet Union, air defense taskings and missile defense taskings, the air bridge, the NEOs. At the same time, we were doing other missions, like Operation Steel Box, moving all the chemical weapons out of Europe, which was a major undertaking, because they had a lot of chemical weapons there that had to be moved out, taken to Johnston Atoll and burned, and that became a big operation, too. So, I mean, these were all nontraditional. I mean you had some warfighting ones, like Proven Force, when we were doing the attacks to the north during the Gulf War, but then you had this whole array of other kinds of missions now coming up. And so this was a fantastic two years for me in terms of personal experience and learning and seeing this new world and these kinds of missions and then being in command with General Galvin. General [James P.] McCarthy was the deputy commander, Admiral Snuffy Smith . . . I mean, these were fantastic guys that knew their stuff and very imaginative, very creative, at a time when you had to be.

Allison: Interesting. What about the things like the Soviet troops in Eastern Europe? I mean did they leave? Was that easy, to get them out of there? How did that piece work?

Zinni: No. Of course, there was pressure to move them out, but they had no place to go. They had troops living in trains. They were living in boxcars. There was no garrison that they could go home to. We ran a couple of—the best way to describe them—conferences and seminars with the Russians, where the Russians wanted to talk about military issues, internal issues. It kind of surprised me how open they were, and when we went to see them, they were talking about problems they had in their military. They were very candid. They were talking about all these deaths they have of the recruits in training and hazing in the barracks.

Allison: They did?

Zinni: Yes. They wanted to talk to us, advice on how we deal with that, because their NCOs were the ones that were hazing, and some of these were resulting in deaths, and they were having these sorts of issues, developing professional NCOs and all that. They obviously could not bring all their troops back. They had no place to put them. They didn't have the structure. They certainly couldn't afford to bring them back. They had a lot of them that were sort of stranded out there. You then had the issues in some of the former Soviet republics, like Central Asia and all, where they thought they were going to sort of send all Russians home, but a lot of Russians that were down in these places like Uzbekistan and Kazakhstan and all, they were second-, third-, fourth-generation Russians, so they didn't have any relationship with Mother Russia. They happened to be Russian, and you saw that in some cases they were going to purge—let's say, if you looked at the military, the Kazakh military, let's say, or the Uzbek military, there were Russian officers in there. They happened to be of Russian descent that lived in there.

Allison: So they're sort of homesteading.

Zinni: Yes, and so that became a problem and some of these countries wanted to go back to their native languages and not use Russian. And finally that all settled out, and then the Russians were accepted and were allowed to participate because, again, they weren't Russian anymore. They had been there for a number of generations. They were integrated into their structure, whether it was business in their society, or military, or whatever. So when you went down there, you saw a Russian that might have been in the military of these units, but they were of Russian descent, but they were not Russians in terms of their nationality.

Allison: Going back to the collapse of the Soviet Union and everything, I remember being shocked, myself, that this happened. It was like nobody knew it was going to happen. I can't understand that we didn't know that that was coming. Was that an intel failure?

Zinni: Yes. It was like we always said their system would collapse, because it was a flawed system. Then when it was happening, we were as shocked as they were.

There were some people that were in denial, and I don't only mean Russians. I mean on our side. They thought, "Oh, this is just temporary. This is going to snap back and Gorbachev will leave, somebody else will come in." And, of course, you remember, when Yeltsin had the standoff, when he stood on the tank and everything. I mean there were attempts to get back to the system. It was interesting being in Russia and in Moscow. A lot of the old people just would not buy it. I did some work when we were looking at economic conditions in Russia, and I would go down and look at their stores and things and how their economic systems were working, because we were trying to help them meet international auditing standards, like I said, and other

things, monetized differently. And I remember, just for example, I went down on one street, and you saw these young people that stood along the sidewalk and held up something. They held up something they bought. And I had a Russian speaker who went around with me, and I said, "What are they doing?" He said, "Well, because we have long lines, very little products on the shelf, they'll wait in line for like five hours and they'll buy something. Then they'll come out on the street and they'll hold it up and they'll charge, let's say, a few rubles more for it." And, of course, what you're paying for is for their time they stood in line. So people would be walking down the aisle, I'll take this. And I said, "That's unbelievable." I said, "That's the first sign of entrepreneurs. These guys are go-getters. They have initiative." And this guy laughed. He said, "Yeah." He says, "Watch for a while." The next thing I saw was this old lady comes down with an umbrella and she's beating these guys and cursing at them and all. And I said, "What's going on?" The old Communism, they're condemning them for trying to get ahead and take advantage, get ahead. That's not the old principal.

So you had this sort of generational difference that you could see out there. And we were trying to make some decisions on how to help them and how to work with them and how to sort of bring them up to a level where the free-market economy would function and of course there were political sides of democratization and everything else. And, again, this was Rich Armitage's program. I was sort of tasked as his military coordinator, but then he had me go around and work on all the areas with them, which was a great experience for me, because it went beyond the military. Like I said, we had offices back here in the State Department, and we were traveling all over the former Soviet Union.

Allison: Nowadays, there's so much sense of antagonism, or whatever it is, between the Department of Defense and the State Department. It seems that there's not a lot of cooperation now. Was there then? Was there more?

Zinni: It was a different era then. You've got to remember, the chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff was Colin Powell, who saw the wisdom in all this, Jack Galvin over there. He said, "We've got to help this and we want full support to whatever Armitage and Secretary of State Baker's doing." It was a different time. There were different kinds of people in there that were much more open.

Allison: Open to working together.

Zinni: Yes, and making this work. So they were very supportive. My boss, General Galvin, when Armitage was in Germany starting this thing, he had come over it. He was up in Bonn and they ordered me to go up and find him and tell him he had anything he wanted from European Command, connect with him, and do whatever he wants. That's how I hooked up with him. And I called back and I said, "Well, Armitage says he wants me on his team. What do I do?" Go wherever Armitage said, do whatever he does. And so we actually set up a little cell back in EuCom that I called on for support, like we had all the airlift support to move these goodwill products out there. We set up a base at Ramstein. We brought them all in, had a logistics base up there. We brought up a PSYOPS [psychological operations] team so that when we built the bundles and everything, and we put [them in] Russian, what they were, like we were sending MREs over and everything, and the medicines. And so we would be using translator PSYOPS to help tag all this stuff so they understood what it was and do the interpretation. And then, of course, when we were in Russia, we were working with

several of their ministers, so our points of contact were several ministries over there, their ministers, their Labor Ministry, their Finance Ministry. They had a Ministry of Social Development or something.

Allison: That's interesting. Did you pick up any antagonism or . . .

Zinni: No, not at all. Like even on the military side, they were very open. Like Marshal Shaposhnikov, their version of the chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff. We always got to see him, talk to him. One of the things we wanted to do was sense out, like I said, if the military was going to go back into the streets and snap it back to communism. Like I said, they shared their problems with us, they hosted us, really very graciously. They listened to everything we had to say, and sometimes we were confusing. They laughed at us. For example, we had these NATO officers there, and we were supposed to begin these sessions on how militaries function in democracy and each NATO general is going to get up and give a speech. The first guy up was a Dutch guy, either Dutch or Dane, and he starts talking about why in a democracy your military should be unionized. And he's giving this speech and we're "Bulls——t!" So we start arguing and the Russians are looking at us, laughing, "Oh, this is democracy? We're supposed to unionize our military?" No, no, no, and the Dutch was saying, "Yes, yes, yes." So we were . . . but it was all good natured. And in Eastern Europe, too, the Eastern Europeans, I went to several of their war colleges and gave some lectures and we actually took a member of the Marine Corps presentation team, the Marines had at that time, took them over and a number of others, again, to reconnect. They were very interested in what our war plans were like. They always wanted to know, in your war plans, if we were to fight, how did you view us? Like the Poles and

the Hungarians? Where did you intend to maneuver? If an attack came, from east to west, what would you do? What were you trying to do in the northern flank and the maritime strategies? So a lot of questions about that. The other thing that really dazzled them was the Gulf War. The overwhelming defeat of Saddam was like a shock to them, because they viewed Iraq as like one of their surrogates. It was their equipment, T-72 tanks and everything else, their doctrine, and the overwhelming defeat that was done so easily by us and our equipment and the complete domination was like a shock. And they were very interested in that. They could not believe that we had that big a gap in terms of our technology capability and doctrine over theirs. And so a lot of the questions came back to try to understand what had happened, what we were doing down there, why had it become that way. And we were really open about a lot of that stuff, but they were very interested in that. Eastern Europe was very different. As soon as the wall came down, there were cheers. I mean I went to Czechoslovakia.

Allison: They were happy.

Zinni: I met [Vaclav] Havel, the new president of Czechoslovakia. They were happy. I mean, they really made an adjustment very quickly where they had experience in democracy and free-market economies, places like Poland, places like Hungary, Czechoslovakia, now of course Czech Republic and Slovakia. Some of the others, a little bit more difficult. I really believe Romania had a lot of possibilities, but they were a little further back, and places like Bulgaria and other places wanted to take a little longer, and they certainly have all come that way. But they were very anxious. They saw this as a great opportunity to come out from under the communists and Soviets. The

Romanians wanted to build a marine corps. They asked for my help. I sent back here to Quantico to get manuals. We sent the Marine mobile training team over to connect with them, to help them, because they weren't allowed to defend toward the east, so they had no security on the Black Sea side, because they couldn't face Russia. All their military, out of the Warsaw Pact, had to face west, and they now needed, obviously, naval infantry, because they were going to be back on the Black Sea. So I went down and worked with them, and it was interesting, because they were showing me the movies of how they killed [Nicolae] Ceausescu and took me through his palace, because all that had just happened.

Allison: So did you get the feeling they really liked Americans? I mean it was just natural goodwill towards Americans?

Zinni: Yes, I mean, they wanted to be part of NATO right away. They wanted to go to the West. They wanted a free-market economy. They wanted democracy. And a lot of them, like I said, knew that from before the Soviet period, from before the Second World War. A little bit more difficult when you got into Russia—not difficult, but obviously—but I still think we were all received well, everywhere we went. And, of course, our message was we're not coming here as victors. We're not coming here gloating. We're coming here to connect. Thank God the friction is over and we now can work together. I mean that was the message. I didn't think we did enough toward the Russians in the way Secretary of State Baker and people like General Galvin really thought we should.

Allison: They really wanted to go to a Marshall Plan.

Zinni: Yes. They saw much more of a Marshall-like plan and connection, bringing them into the fold, than maybe was supported, not only by going back here in the United States, but also from European partners and everybody else. They all didn't want to work together in some sort of international approach. Everybody wanted to run their own relationships, whether it was Germans or French or whatever.

Allison: So there was no organization, really, to . . .

Zinni: No. That's what Armitage was trying to do.

Allison: Try to set up an international . . .

Zinni: Use the initial goodwill gestures, but set up an international sort of Marshall Plan and structure, and it never really came off.

Allison: And I guess there's nothing in the UN to really do something like that. I guess NATO, maybe.

Zinni: Well, NATO, we did the military contacts, both American and NATO. So we did some of them as NATO members and we did some of them on our own, as American contacts. But we also did a number of other things. We opened the Marshall Center. We started to bring in officers and not only military but other government officials to the Marshall Center, where they had courses on economic and security aspects, functioning in democracy and politics and connections with those officers. So the Marshall Center was opened as basically a strategic center that started to bring them in in that respect. We did these "Partnership for Peace" programs and military-to-military relationships, security assistance programs. We were starting all those up.

Allison: This is through NATO, right?

Zinni: No. This was U.S. The Marshall Center was NATO.

Allison: Where is that?

Zinni: It's down in Garmisch, in southern Germany. That was NATO. We did them both through NATO and the U.S. directly, on that much of this. So it was a mix.

Allison: There was a big push to do away with NATO, wasn't there, at that time?

Zinni: I would say there were some people who felt that there was no purpose for NATO. And there were others, like General Galvin, that said not so fast. NATO could serve as a way of sort of bringing them into the fold, having a way to cooperate more militarily, to bring up military standards, to have militaries more responsible, learn how to function in democracies. So NATO could serve a purpose to do all that. In addition to that, they were beginning to talk about NATO out of area. When we did Provide Comfort, although that was a U.S.-led coalition, it was all NATO countries. It wasn't done under a NATO flag, but in effect it was NATO countries.

Allison: Provide Comfort was. It was sort of evolving NATO into a new role?

Zinni: It wasn't NATO, officially, but it was NATO countries, working under a coalition. Except for the name and the flag, it was basically a NATO operation. When we put the Patriots down in Israel, there was a Dutch battery there, too, because, again, it wasn't NATO, it was U.S. At that time, Qaddafi started to act up again. The Italians got nervous, because back in the '80s, when Qaddafi got hostile, he shot a Scud at Lampedusa Island. That's a small Italian island that's not too far off the coast of Libya, and they wanted to appeal to NATO to put the Patriot missiles down there. I got sent down there to work with the Italians and to convince them not to ask for Patriot missiles down there. It's not a waste to put a battery there, but to demonstrate that we could get there very quickly. So I went down and talked to the minister of

defense, the Italian minister of defense and others, and we arranged a little sort of exercise, a demonstration of capability. We deployed some Patriots and things to Sigonella, show that we could rapidly respond, and it satisfied them.

Allison: You were able to talk Italian to them, right? Can't you speak Italian?

Zinni: Yeah, enough to get by, but we did business in . . .

Allison: That impressed them, though?

Zinni: I think the name impressed them.

Allison: Okay, so NATO is changing and it had to sort of start doing different things at this time?

Zinni: Yes, when I left in '92, it was still up in the air. I think there was no serious consideration of disbanding NATO. I don't think it was ever really serious. I think everybody saw the value of it and saw that the nature of its purposes might change and its missions might change. But everybody was comfortable with that structure. Obviously, European Command was changing now. The European Command, since basically you had the American commander is also SACEur, Supreme Allied Commander, Europe, that NATO had, it was basically like the American component to NATO. And it did other things, but it wasn't like other unified commands. But now it was becoming more like other unified commands. We were having our own set of crises and emergencies and U.S. operations and this sort of thing. So, like I said, those two years were just crazy. It went by like mad. I found myself all over the map and, like I said, all these different kind of operations, not only doing the unified command-level planning, the combatant command-level planning, and the command and control

from that end, but then going out and taking positions in the task forces out there and managing them, and then the weird nature of all these different kinds of missions.

Allison: You'd mentioned you had done some stuff with special operations back at Headquarters Marine Corps.

Zinni: Yes.

Allison: And then you go out and you work with Brigadier General Dick Potter, U.S. Army. What were his views toward special ops? Did you agree with him?

Zinni: Oh, yes. Potter was tremendous, because he ran our SOC, our Special Operations Command, EuCom Special Operations. He was SOCEUR. Each unified command has a special operations subunified command. And he was exceptional in that. First of all, he was a very experienced guy, old special forces officer, been around.

Allison: Green Beret.

Zinni: Yes, and just had done a lot, a real hero in the Army and a tremendous number of operational experiences. What always impressed me about his SOC was how thorough their planning was, how tight their logistics and everything else. You think of special operations, you're thinking, oh, a bunch of shooters and all this stuff.

Allison: Guys with long hair.

Zinni: Their detailed planning, the way they deployed, the way they structured their logistics support and everything else, it was amazing. I mean I really liked dealing with Potter. So we pushed a lot of missions onto Potter. Like, he brought a JSOTF, a joint special operations task force, to Provide Comfort, and we put his SF guys up in the hills and the camps to take control of those camps and to bring order and control those things and run them and work that out. In Proven Force, obviously, we did some special

operations missions inside Iraq in the north. We also did pilot recovery and other things with their guys there, with the special air and everything else and how we did it. He ran a number of the NEOs in Africa. He did one in Zaire and one in Sierra Leone. The MEU did the one in Liberia, so it was a good mix of all sorts of different structures.

Allison: Were you beginning to think that the Marine Corps needed a special operations capability, outside of the MEUSOC [Marine expeditionary unit special operations capable]?

Zinni: You know, the thing that got me, that always disappointed me, was the SOC community liked the MEUSOC, and I always thought the MEUSOC could be like the Rangers, a tier-two force. In the SOF world, though, before you can assume that role, formally, they do a certification. So it was the responsibility of Potter for the European Command to certify the tier two, and he always wanted to go down and certify the MEU, because he thought this is great. I mean, using the MEU, or embedding special operations in the MEU and using the MEU as an outer perimeter, as the larger force, as whatever you need, and working with them was great. But it was this bulls—t that we would not do that—no one comes down and certifies Marines. We don't do that. I thought this was stupid. First of all, he's doing it because it is a SOF requirement and the CINC requires it to certify tier-two forces and all this other stuff. I mean the CINC's the boss. It wasn't that the SOF guys wanted to come down and tell us what to do or do a test or grade us in some way. That wasn't the purpose, and, as a matter of fact, Potter especially loved Marines. He always used to tell me, "Jeez, if I wasn't a Green Beret, I'd be a Marine." He had Marines on the staff. Now,

Major General Rick Tryon was on his staff. He had Marines on his staff. On the SOC staff, we had people there. And I didn't understand this reluctance. We made it harder to work with. The same thing happened with Provide Comfort. When the MEU came in, Shalikashvili said, "I need to split them up." We needed the helicopters to do one thing. We needed the BLT to do another thing. We actually needed the MSSG [MEU service support group] to do a different thing, have a different mission. And he said, "I need them to be at different places. I'm not trying to violate your hallowed MAGTF concept, but I need to do this." And I was the chief of staff, and I agreed with Shali. I called General [Carl E.] Mundy, who was the commandant at that time, and I said, "You know, General Mundy, this is going to piss a lot of people off," but I said, "We need to split up the MEU, at least for the beginning of this." And General Mundy said, "You're the senior Marine there. If you think it's the right thing to do, you do it. Don't worry about that." I'll tell you, I took s——t.

Allison: Did you?

Zinni: I got calls from our PP&O [plans, policies and operations] generals, cursing my name, the fleet Marine officer down in 6th Fleet, up in arms. Thank God for Jim Jones. When he came ashore, and I said, "Jim, temporarily, we've got these different missions. It's not an intention to break up the MAGTF." And he said to General Shalikashvili, "General Shali, we're here to make this work." He said, "Whatever you need, your Marines will do it, and any way you want to." And when he walked out from that first meeting, General Shali says, "You know, I really like that guy. I'm really impressed with him." And he said, "I'm going to remember that he gave us support that way." When we decided to go into northern Iraq, when the decision was made and we didn't

know what we were going to do in there, we had to make the first move into Iraq. The Army really wanted to be the first ones in. General Shali said, “No, the MEU. Put it together. It will be the first.” He was the deputy commander of U.S. Army Europe at that time, and he took the Army airborne battalion combat team that came down from Vicenza, commanded by Lieutenant Colonel John Abizaid, and he put them under the MEU. So the MEU, Jim Jones now had the BLT under [Tony Corwin] and he had the airborne combat team and he had maneuver elements. They put them together and they operated, and the Army was not happy, but Abizaid loved it. Abizaid was calling back, writing messages, this is the way to go. I mean, this whole concept, the MEU is the way to go. Because he had helicopter support, logistic support, and it was like the second BLT. So Abizaid and Jim Jones became really tight, close. They loved operating with the Marines. So this flexibility and willingness to do it, I mean, was really proving itself out. Like I said, then this special-purpose MAGTF comes down that’s basically logistics-based and goes out and does all these things. So I think the ability to force the Marine Corps to think more flexibly and not be bound up by . . .

Allison: Doctrine?

Zinni: Yes, because what I found when I got there—I’ve had to talk with senior officers—is senior Marines come in and they spout stuff as doctrine which isn’t doctrine. It’s just organization or it’s a way of doing things. Most doctrine is an 80-percent rule. It’s a guideline, but you find exceptions to it all the time. I think that was the beginning of demonstrating more flexibility. I’ll give you another case in point. We didn’t want to keep the whole MEU off of Liberia. We got stuck in Liberia. We actually had to keep Marines ashore to protect the embassy. The embassy did not want to withdraw, and

General Galvin kept saying, “I don’t want to keep all three ships in the MEU down there. I just want to—can’t we split them up?” And he’s getting all this bulls——t from 6th Fleet and everywhere, you can’t split the MEU, you can’t split the ARG [amphibious ready group]. I said to General Galvin, “That’s bulls——t. You can split them.” You’ll leave an LPD down there with a couple of helicopters and a Marine company and you bring everybody else back up in the MEB, because we needed the MEU in the Med, too. So we split the ARG and we split the MEU. Oh, and of course the doctrine sphincter muscles got [tight]. They were all over my case. And they were—I mean, in the joint world, they were gaining more respect for Marines by being more flexible and less doctrinaire about all this stuff.

Allison: And it helps Marines in the future, like it did the 24th MEU there.

Zinni: Yeah, yes. Fortunately, you had guys like Jim Jones in there and others that were much more forward thinking, innovative, and flexible.

Allison: So that 24th MEU basically became the command and control for the other units that are flowing in there?

Zinni: Well, then they became the U.S. component. In other words, then we got a Royal Marine brigade that had two Royal Marine commandos and a Dutch commando unit. Then we got a French brigade under a wonderful officer, Maurice Lepage. We got an Italian brigade. We got a Spanish brigade. And so then, as we got each of these brigades—and I really would consider the MEU a brigade equivalent in terms of size, and it had the extra battalion and other support. Then they each got a sector in Iraq, in northern Iraq.

Allison: What about working with the Iraqis? Any comments on that?

Zinni: Saddam sent up a brigadier general, because we ordered that we wanted a liaison, a senior officer. He sent up a brigadier general and actually he was pretty good. We set up this military coordination center. We had an Army colonel in there and we had the Kurds and we had the Iraqis, and then ours. That was for day-to-day coordination and deconfliction, because we had all sorts of problems with the Iraqi military. First, they wanted to keep their police in the cities and all that. We said yes, but then they had secret police, Mukhabarat, and the Kurds shot them up and chased them out. Saddam had eight palaces up there. They wanted to keep security on them. We said okay, but then some of their security forces took some potshots at the Royal Marines. The Royal Marines blew them away and they had to chase them out. Sometimes they shot at our helicopters, and we had to take action. And then sometimes we ordered them out of an area. We were going to move the Kurds in. There was resistance and we had to deal with them. So he was our point of contact on this. When it got into some serious discussions, Shali would go down and they would send up a three star named Saber, from Baghdad. Our understanding, he was the head of their intelligence, military intelligence. He'd come up to deal with them. Not a great guy, but basically we were dictating terms. My understanding about the Iraqi general that had been there (Mashwan Denoon) was he was called back to Baghdad and was executed.

Allison: Really? For being too nice to you guys.

Zinni: Well, what I had heard is some members of his tribe were suspected of plotting a coup, and even though he wasn't involved in it, because he had this day-to-day contact, which he was ordered to do by Saddam, they don't want to take a chance [on it]. That's what we had heard. We had a lot of Kurds defecting. We had Saddam's son,

Uday, his bodyguard, who actually had his face reconstructed to look like [a Kurd?].

He had fallen out of favor and been whacked around and so he and his wife beat feet, and we had a number of people that we gained asylum that came up to the north.

Allison: Was there any thinking that the Coalition should go in and go ahead and take Saddam out?

Zinni: No.

Allison: You heard a lot of that. I used to hear a lot of that.

Zinni: I think the administration back then, the first Bush administration, was too smart.

Allison: They could see what would happen.

Zinni: Yes.

Allison: Even though the Shia down in the south, they got the idea that . . .

Zinni: Yes, it probably would have been . . . in hindsight, this is looking later, at CentCom, it would have been better to maybe create a no-fly zone. Well, we did have a no-fly zone in the south, but maybe a security zone and push the Iraqi military out of the south. I think you would have had problems with Iran coming and filling that, coming into Iraq. So, I mean, it would have been problematic anyway.

Allison: What about the media, sir? Did you have much to do with the media, your perspectives?

Zinni: Yes, it was all over. I don't remember that we had any problems with them, or issues. The media—like in Provide Comfort, we have a remarkable embassy in Turkey, Ambassador [Amnon] Abramowitz. The deputy chief of mission was a guy named Marc Grossman, who later became ambassador to Turkey and was a great guy. He was our liaison with the task force. So the political connection and the work with the Turks

was managed very well. We set up a dual chain of command the Turks wanted, just like Schwarzkopf had with Prince Khalid. We had that up there with the Turks, had a parallel command. We had a Turkish general, with his staff with us. Our headquarters was an interlink, but we had forward bases at Diyarbakir in southwest Turkey, and obviously we had bases inside Iraq, too, northern Iraq. So the Turks worked with us. It was dangerous inside. We had PKK and Dev Sol. Dev Sol was a Turkish terrorist group and PKK was a Kurdish group, and we had to worry about our lines of operation and our lines of logistics. We had a couple of run-ins with them.

I think Dev Sol was definitely targeting us. PKK really wasn't, but the Turks would be running operations with them and they would actually go into northern Iraq after them, and so we're running our operation. They're running their operation. So the coordination and everything on this was highly sensitive.

Allison: But the Turks generally work with you, as a government, in an official capacity.

Zinni: Yes, yes. They didn't want the Kurdish refugees running down out of the hills. They wanted them to flood into there, which created a problem, because we had them all up in the hills in some bad conditions. We had over 500,000 Kurds we were working with. There were 10,000 that were killed or died up in those hills. When we first went up there, it was wintertime, and it was huge, the snow, we were in the mountains and Mount Judi up there. It was really tough terrain. Those camps were miserable, before we stabilized it. The populations, a lot of them were city Kurds coming out of Zakho and Duhok and these places. They weren't sort of the kinds of Kurds that were used to living out, like farmers and everything. They couldn't survive. They were really not capable of practicing that kind of sanitation and all. They got themselves in trouble.

We were close to having outbreaks of cholera and everything else. We had representatives of the CDC from Atlanta, the Centers for Disease Control, there and Doctors Without [Borders] and others, a lot of military medical field hospitals we put up.

Allison: And Jay Garner led one of the joint task forces.

Zinni: Yes, we had two subordinate task forces, one under Dick Potter that managed the camps in the hills and ran those, when we first went in. And then Jay Garner's task force was created when we went into northern Iraq. His joint task force had control of the ground units down in there, like the MEU, the Royal Marine brigade, the Spanish brigade, the Italian brigade. And then, at Incirlik, where we had the main CTF—we had two JTFs, one in the hills with the camps for the Kurds and then one down in northern Iraq with the military forces. And then we had some national command elements at Incirlik. In other words, like the Brits and the Italians and the French had a national headquarters there. They took their operational forces and chopped them to us, OpCon [operational control] but they retained a command—a national command element. So, in addition to running operational through the CTF, we had sitting with us these three-star generals that were the national commanders. And so we had to make sure they were briefed and kept up. They weren't the operational chain. So that was a little unusual, and taking care of those guys, although they were great. Everybody who was there would do the right thing.

Allison: Very complicated setup.

Zinni: Yes, I mean, we were making it up as we went along. There was one moment that command relationships would become tricky, and I had this big chart. I used to do all

the briefings when the congressmen came through and General [Colin] Powell came through. He was the chairman at that time, and I was giving a briefing. As sharp as he is, he looked at the sort of artificial command structure and he knew it wasn't . . . he said to me, "Tony, tell me, what's the real command relationships, OpCon, TaCon [tactical control]?" I said, "General, it's HandCon [handshake]." He loved it. He laughed, and he said he loved it.

Allison: Was that the first time you had met him?

Zinni: That was the first time I met him.

Allison: So did you have a pretty good impression of him?

Zinni: Yes, and then I got to know him a lot better through Rich Armitage. They're very close friends. So when we were doing Provide Comfort and we went back, I got to talk to him and meet him, because I became very close friends with Rich Armitage.

Allison: Of course Proven Force, that becomes Northern Watch, doesn't it?

Zinni: No, Provide Comfort becomes Northern Watch.

Allison: Oh, it does.

Zinni: Proven Force was the air campaign against Iraq that was EuCom's part in the Gulf War. After the Gulf War, then it's Provide Comfort with the Kurds.

Allison: Provide Comfort II, right? Is that Provide Comfort II?

Zinni: Well, then it became Provide Comfort II, just the air piece. Then it became Northern Watch.

Allison: Northern Watch, okay. Any perspectives on that?

Zinni: No, I was Provide Comfort II. We got down to that. They brought a brigadier Air Force general in. They kept me down there for a while, just as a transition, since it was

a whole new structure, and then I left Iraq. As I said, I had a total of seven months down there through these different phases.

Allison: It's a real eye-opener—any final thoughts on your tour there?

Zinni: Yes, it was a real OJT [on the job training], in joint, combined operations on peacekeeping, humanitarian, on security operations, enough combat involved in it. So you're seeing all these different kinds of component parts to this.

Allison: Fourth-generation warfare.

Zinni: Yes.

Allison: What about . . . you worked with Morton Abramowitz?

Zinni: Yes, he was our ambassador to Turkey. Great guy. I mean, when the Air Force planners at USAFE came up with the idea of setting up an air attack force out of Turkey to hit the bases that couldn't be reached from the south and all, and we presented this to Abramowitz, I thought he'd say, "No way. You can't do that." He was very open to me. "That's good. I'll convince the Turks. We can make this work." The other thing he did that was interesting, too, was when we first went in, when the Kurds were in the hills, we were airlifting, air-dropping food and everything else and building these bundles. We had every rigger from all the services back there, running this massive operation. And he came down and said, he said, "I'll tell you what you want to do." We were putting military tents up. This was an expensive operation. He said, "You ought to" . . . the Turks lost a lot of money by supporting this operation and everything else, but they were running these oil trucks back and forth across the borders. He said, "You ought to find a way to contract to buy local food, because MREs are not what Kurds need to be eating. It's good in an emergency—and use these

trucks to deliver it, because they're out of work and out of business and the Turks are suffering economically and it would be an incentive for them, cooperating." So we went then, these trucks that used to carry oil, they took their oil tanks off, like 5,000 of them, and we started to contract to buy local foods like flour and other things and had these trucks start to deliver them to the camps and all that. And we were spending about five dollars a day per Kurd in our military means of providing food.

When we went to contracting Turkish trucks and Turkish foodstuffs and using the Turkish system, it went down to one dollar a day per Kurd. So it was an 80 percent savings in being able to do that in a way. And then Abramowitz said, "You have the side benefit, too, then, of this rewards the Turks for being cooperative and all this." And they allowed us to do Proven Force, Provide Comfort, to run out of there and it helps their economy, and then it's cheaper for us to do it. And then it's sustainable, because we can start drawing down military forces, because we had all these airlift planes, all these riggers. Every rigger in the U.S. military was out there for this operation.

Allison: It's a win-win situation.

Zinni: It was, yes. I mean it was the largest rigging operation in history, to that point.

Allison: Rigging these airdrops.

Zinni: Yes, the bundles.

Allison: I guess the Air Force was really getting into that, though. You're using their stuff.

They're playing an important part in this and everything. Did you ever, in this type of environment, where you're working on different services—and you probably talked

about this to some degree, but was there competition between the services to get into the action?

Zinni: I didn't see it. I didn't see it on the ground. I mean, sometimes you got grumblings from the senior headquarters. Like I said, even the Marines were worried about the MEU issues, Army worried about their forces being first in or something. They were still sorting out air command and control issues. Remember this whole concept of the JFACC [joint forces air component commander] and all this, this is all relatively new. You've got a Navy carrier. You had Marine helicopters and you had Army helicopters and you had Air Force **air** and how that was coming together. But I would say everybody wanted to make it work and figure out how to make it work. I didn't have any experience in the European Command of anybody being obstructionist or demanding. I mean there might be little grumblings. Grumblings certainly did not come from the top. The senior Army command, the senior Marine Corps command, the senior Navy, Air Force command, all wanted this to work.

Allison: Back here in Washington?

Zinni: There might be some iron majors or colonels or something that mumbled and grumbled or did something that made that, but I didn't see that from the senior headquarters. It was all what can we do? How can we make this work? What can we contribute? We were plowing new ground, so everybody was trying to come up with the right way to do this and the right way to set it up. The Air Force knows how to run air operation centers. They didn't know how to run joint operation centers, and since that was my job at EuCom—running a battle staff and a crisis action team and all that and putting in a command center—what they wanted me to do when I went down as

the deputy originally was to set up a JOC, a joint operations center. So that's one of the things that we did, but then I stayed and did all kinds of other things. But everybody was really eager to—"Yes, let's." Now, of course the Air Force does it and they run JTFs and all, but this was new. And running operations centers was something new.

Allison: This is really a watershed time period.

Zinni: Yes, in many ways it was, for a lot of the services. I mean, working with the NGOs, working with the United Nations, bringing political advisors in, building coalition task force operations. There were some unique things. For example, General Schwarzkopf had set up that parallel chain of command with the Muslim forces under Khalid, Prince Khalid, who I know very well. And the Turks wanted to do the same thing. So we were copying that and working that. So, I mean, this whole environment was new, the Patriots, the NEOs, the Balkans work, the humanitarian work, Provide Hope in the former Soviet Union in the republics, Provide Comfort, these were all very different operations. I mean, some of the combat operations, like Proven Force and all, were pretty standard, but we were mixing combat in with humanitarian, with peacekeeping, with security operations, goodwill missions and political missions that were supported by military, economic. . . . It was a hell of a two years.

Allison: How often did the VIPs come through? You talked about congressional delegations.

Zinni: Yes, we got a lot of them. We had senators. We probably had half a dozen senators and congressional representatives, a whole bunch of CODELs [congressional delegations] came through to visit, the chairman of the Joint Chiefs, deputy secretary

of defense and a number of others who came through. But we had a good flow of VIPs come through Provide Comfort and some of these other operations.

Allison: Were they a headache?

Zinni: No, very interested, wanted to see what we were doing, obviously very supportive of the troops. And I ended up, like the Provide Comfort, as the chief of staff, I ended up—we had a visitor's bureau. You've got to set those up, you learn that right away, to handle all this. So we had the mechanics down. I did all the briefings. I took them out, because they all wanted to go into Iraq, wanted to see Kurds, and so I took them all out.

Allison: Any of those individuals particularly impress you as far as being . . .

Zinni: Yes, Senator [Patrick] Leahy from Vermont. He came out, and his wife, and what I found out is he was very much interested in refugee issues. It's one of his sort of personal causes and he seemed very knowledgeable about handling—because when we had to take the Kurds out of the hills in Turkey and bring them back to Iraq, this was moving refugees. The UN high commissioner of refugees, Madame Ogata came down and processing refugees, once they cross a border, there's a whole set of legal issues, forms to be filled out by each of them. They have to agree to this. The way it's done is very regulated. I didn't know anything about this. Leahy is really into refugee issues, and when I talked to his wife for a while, she said, "Yes, he drags me to every refugee camp in the world," totally nice. But he was interested in this, because of the refugee issues and humanitarian issues, and I was surprised that he had this kind of background and knowledge into that. There were a number of congressmen to come

down, too. Senator [Carl] Levin from Michigan, [J. James] Exon, Chuck Robb, a whole number of them that came out.

Allison: Okay, great. You got to Israel, too, and sort of checking the Patriots, that's a new thing.

Zinni: Yes, that was my first time in Israel. I was the only general sent down there. So I had to deal with the senior military leadership down there and went out with the Patriot batteries. And, like I said, the Israeli Defense Force leadership was not too happy with not being able to go out and whack the Iraqis. They were beating me up over this.

Allison: Were they?

Zinni: Well, I was the only senior guy, relatively senior guy they could get their hands on. I mean, they understood and they were nice to me, but it was kind of tough for them. Now, we had set up a really unusual Rube Goldberg warning system. Out at Cheyenne Mountain was where we detected Scud launches, and so from Cheyenne Mountain, there was a direct line to the command center, our battle staff, in Stuttgart, in Germany, in EuCom. And then there was an open line to the Patriot command center, because there were like five, six batteries. And so we would get a launch, and you only had I think it was like six or seven minutes. So you would get Cheyenne Mountain say[ing], "We've got a launch, we've got a launch" from in this area out in western Iraq. We'd get the launch and they would quickly give us a direction, an azimuth heading. Then we would call it down and they would alert the batteries. Of course, we had batteries in Haifa, in Tel Aviv, and around Jerusalem, taking a shot. So this was our open-line chain of command that we had to jury-rig.

Allison: Amazing.

Zinni: There were some issues about the Patriots, the first time the Patriots were ever used, and there were some issues about their effectiveness and questions. so I went down to take a look at this and I became an expert on the Patriots. I went in the vans with lieutenants and everything. And what we were finding, of course, is the Patriots had a system that they first put in place where they were on automatic just to simplify it. But then there were Patriot launches against atmospheric clutter. So they were having these accidental discharges or firings. So then they had to do it all manually. Then, Saddam was shooting at max range, experimenting with the Scuds, trying to increase their range and payload and all this stuff. So, a lot of times, when the Scud was coming overhead, it would break up. And, at first, they didn't know what, literally, what you saw in the scope was this thing break up, and what do you shoot at? And so you shoot at something. So sometimes you didn't get the warhead and it came down and impacted. So then the lieutenants, what they would do is they would take the tapes and they'd run them over and over again. And what they discovered was the warhead kept the same velocity, the other things that broke up slowed down. And you had to pick this up right away. Of course, these lieutenants were pretty sharp; they could. So then they got to the point where they could pick the warhead out, engage it, and hit it. Then the other problem became, of course, it's a point defense system. So it's meant to defend airfields and so it shoots down a Scud or a missile, they land, but of course they're landing in cities. So now they impact and blow it up and all the s——t comes down and, of course, people were saying, "Well, wait a minute. It's not effective. I mean, look, it impacted, it destroyed two houses, and all that stuff." But that's the way it's designed to do. A megalopolis, you're looking at an urban area when you go from

Haifa to Tel Aviv that's huge. The other thing that was interesting is the Israelis created this, what they called the "Scud Farm," and they activate all their scientists when they're in conflict and they have a technical issue. So, obviously, chemists and physicists are all there looking at these Scuds. They would go to the scene of an impact and they would gather up all the debris, and it's unbelievable. They'd go to this place that literally was a farm. They would reconstruct the Scuds and even the Patriots. And I would go out there and look at these things, and they were amazing. And they would be able to tell you, "Look what Saddam's doing here. He's trying to expand the warhead, he's trying to put more . . ." and so they could see what he was doing in all of these things. They were plotting and analyzing, and we were plotting the shots, which were all, except one, toward Haifa or Tel Aviv and these cities. They didn't take any shots at Jerusalem, obviously, because they have the Palestinians there and everything. The last shot he took was a concrete warhead and there were people speculating, "Ah, well, he's so desperate he's shooting a training round." But then the Israelis called me in and they showed me, there was this weird trajectory. It wasn't like the others. And I said, "Where's that going." They said, "Well, it's going toward Dimona." That's all they would say. That's where their nuclear reactors were. Like a lucky-shot penetration or something. So it was interesting. But that whole process was interesting.

Allison: That was an interesting place to be, at the end of the war in Jerusalem. You said something in your book about it had a special effect on you in a spiritual sense . . .

Zinni: Yes, I mean, coming to Jerusalem my first time, the Old City, the significance of it. Obviously, we all grow up as Christians and remember hearing about Jerusalem in the

Bible studies and being in a place like that, the historical significance, all the wars that have been fought, the centerpiece of three religious belief systems, Abrahamic belief systems. So there's kind of an aura around Jerusalem, and later, in my time in there as a peace envoy, even more so.

Allison: Yes, sir. I understand you need to go. I've got one other question. As you go out to a joint tour like this, to EuCom, do you get briefing from the Marine Corps? I mean do you get marching orders from the Marine Corps? Nothing like that?

Zinni: No. No, there was nothing, no protection of the family jewels or anything like that.

Allison: You're pretty much out of the chain of command, the Marine Corps chain of command at that point, right?

Zinni: Well, at that stage of the game, I was the senior Marine officer in Europe. There was a time I think when I first got there that General [Jefferson D.] Howell was up in Norway. But then I became the senior Marine in Europe. And you don't think about that, but FMF didn't have a . . . I was a senior full-time general, even though brigadier. But it's interesting, because like Belleau Wood, they found the remains of a Marine and they wanted to inter him in the national cemetery up there, which is actually ours, and they had to open it up. So you get these things where you go off and do these kinds of things, too. And then, as the senior Marine, you get to normal birthday balls. You go up to Iceland and these places in the Marine barracks at the MSG [Marine security guards]. So there was this little bit of the senior Marine. Like when the Marine Corps presentation team came around, the Marine Corps asked me to go around with it. And, of course, I have to ask my boss if that's okay, to do Marine business like that, if it doesn't interfere, but I was doing some of that, too. General

Mundy was very [supportive]. He said, "Look, on Marine issues, you're the senior Marine in Europe."

Allison: You make the call.

Zinni: And he said, "You make the call and we'll support you. Let us know what you're doing and why you're doing it, but we'll support you." He came out to visit a couple of times, was really great. The thing I really liked, too, was when he came out, the Army hosted him. General [Crosbie E.] Saint was the USAREUR commander, and General Mundy came out. We took him out to Grafenwoehr and Hohenfels and the U.S. Army up in Heidelberg and they were very gracious, really treated him well. I liked the whole environment. I think it was because of General Galvin and General McCarthy and people like Admiral Snuffy Smith and Dick Potter. It was a really healthy environment. I never saw any service parochialism out there. It was certainly not amongst the senior leadership. How do we make this work together? The chief of staff out there, Army three star, General [Shellberg?] and others really made it work. You're the senior service guy, but you're way down the food chain from those guys.

I learned so much about operations. I learned, like when we were doing the NEO planning and everything else. Of course, I knew how to do NEO planning. I had been a MEU commander and a BLT commander and I knew from that perspective, but now, starting to think about political issues and coalition issues and relationships with ambassadors and all that, and other issues that you don't think of. When we did the first NEO planning, I did the plan with General Galvin, and listened to this old master here giving you all sorts of things to consider that I would never have thought of. It was like a War College course, just being with him in all this.

Allison: Great OJT.

Zinni: Yes, yes. And he would talk me through, like, why he would make certain decisions. They're just considerations at his level of being a SACEUR and a CINC that, of course, at that period of my career I would never have thought of or would have impacted me, because I thought purely operational. So later on, when I was a CINC, I mean, those were valuable nuggets.

Allison: And you're starting to get into a real political realm there.

Zinni: Yes.

Allison: So that's a whole different ball of wax.

Zinni: All right.

Allison: All right, sir, thank you.

End of Session VII

UNITED STATES MARINE CORPS HISTORY DIVISION
Oral History Interview

Interviewee: General Anthony C. Zinni
Date: 12 October 2007
Length: 01:35:29
Interviewer: Dr. Fred Allison

SESSION VIII

Allison: This is the eighth session of the interview with General Anthony Zinni, and today is the 12th of October, Columbus Day.

Zinni: Columbus Day.

Allison: The actual Columbus Day 2007, and the interview is being done by Fred Allison and, again, we're doing the interview at Command and Staff College. Sir, I'd like to start the interview at the point you were assigned deputy CG [commanding general] MCCDC [Marine Corps Combat Development Command] in 1992. What were your impressions of Quantico and MCCDC at that time?

Zinni: Well, they were exciting times. I had come back and General [Charles C.] Krulak and General [Walter E.] Boomer were just leaving. General Krulak was coming in as I came here. Of course, it was after the Gulf War and other things. The Marine Corps had developed a new concept for determining concepts and requirements. General Marty Steele had been an integral part of that, developing the new way of doing business. Much of the requirements for the Marine Corps were going to be driven by concepts and by doctrine and Quantico was going to play a bigger role and be restructured. General Krulak came down to do that. There was a close tie, with now a closer tie, being instituted with the Navy on these things. Admiral [William] Owens

and General Krulak were designated by the Commandant and the CNO [chief of naval operations] to work together on developing this sort of thing. So MCCDC now, with this concepts-based requirement system, the restructuring of MCCDC, all the things that evolved from General [Alfred M.] Gray's (initial) changes and now this that had come in place. So MCCDC was really an exciting place. A lot was happening here. General Krulak's obvious enthusiasm and direction. Much of the functions that had been done out of Headquarters Marine Corps came down here. Things were going to be more determined, based on a conceptual idea rather than the programmatic, so it was an exciting time. We were very busy and, as deputy CG, I didn't come back to kind of this sleepy little place.

Especially working with General Krulak, it was day on, stay on. The new sort of bond with the Navy, we created these, quote, "Navy-Marine Corps War Games" that I worked with Admiral Allen. He was designated as my counterpart on these things. We developed scenarios that would drive us toward how Navy-Marine Corps cooperation, procurement, understanding acquisitions, strategies of mutual interest like aviation, amphibious shipping. The senior leadership, both Navy and Marine Corps, came together. We did these things at Quantico or we did them up at Newport. Then the Commandant and the CNO would come in, the secretary of the navy, and would be briefed on all this. So it was a dynamic place with a lot of things happening and a lot of things that fall into our responsibility. The deputy's role had increased, because General Krulak was involved in a lot of other things that drew him external to the Marine Corps and spending a lot of his time in Washington and other places on these

issues, so the deputy had to do much in making sure the internal workings went right, too.

Allison: Had the Warfighting Center been stood up at that time?

Zinni: The Warfighting Center was up, the T&E [Training and Education] Center, Doctrine Center. The Marine Corps University, of course, had been stood up and was well under its way. General [Peter] Pace was the president of the Marine Corps University, and so all of these things now that had their roots with General Gray's changes and now had gone through several other evolutions by this time were all sort of flourishing.

Allison: And SYSCOM [Systems Command] had just been stood up, too, I believe.

Zinni: Our Systems Command had been stood up, and we were working very closely with them. General [James A.] Brabham, who had the old Development Command, and now its new identity, wanted to ensure that everything that they were pursuing was tied into our concepts, so he and I got together once a week every Friday to review where we were, what was being driven, exchange thoughts and ideas. He really was a big believer in their developmental things being driven by our concepts and what went on. So, again, it was a unique time in our history. Of course, it didn't last and others had changed that, but at that time I think we were onto something. But it was very complex, very complicated, and hard for most people to understand, and sort of the traditional view of Quantico as just schools was still held in many places. One of the things, which kind of leads into the Somalia thing, General Krulak says, "Were not going to be successful here unless what MCCDC is trying to do is embraced by the whole Marine Corps." And that means that you've got to be relevant to the Fleet

Marine Force. They've got to look at Quantico, because they're going to look at us and say, "What's going on with Quantico? There's more things, requiring more people, more resources, what does it do for me in the FMF?" And he wanted to be sure that the FMF knew what we were doing, that we were connected to them and we responded to them and their needs.

Allison: The concept sounds more like it's out in front of the Marine Corps, though.

Zinni: You'd hear like the Army and others talk about a doctrine-driven system. Our belief was, no, doctrine is another element, like organization, manning, training and education, leader development and all that. It is a component. All those things, sort of the old acronym, DOTMLPF [doctrine, organization, training, materiel, leadership and education, personnel and facilities] that talks about personnel and the manpower, all the things that make up a service, have to be driven by something before doctrine, and it has to be concept. So this is before doctrine. We were dealing with whole new sets of concepts, like ship-to-shore, ship-to-objective. We heard a whole series of things now that were ideas, that were concepts, that would have to be drawn down into doctrine, decide how the Marine Corps is organized and equipped and all. So the development of concepts, the focus on concepts and the distilling of concepts down to the things that make up the structure and the organization and the doctrine and the training and education of people all had to be done through this system.

Allison: Was there a dominating concept, ship-to-objective, maneuver warfare, had the Navy come out . . .

Zinni: That was one of many. There was no one dominating concept. I mean, obviously, we saw our maritime legacy and association with the Navy as important, from the sea and

all these other ideas about that conceptual basis. The Navy worked with us on that, on “From the Sea” and some of the other doctrines, or documents and so it was Navy-Marine Corps cooperation on those things, “Maneuver from the Sea” and a number of other things that fell out from that. So there were some sort of master concepts, some sort of secondary concepts and flowed from them, too, but they were all going to drive how the Marine Corps was designed, if you will.

Allison: Interesting. Also at that time, they stood up a very important new program here at Quantico, the MSTP [MAGTF Staff Training Program]. Were you involved with that?

Zinni: When I was here before as a colonel with T&E, we got interested in this Army program, the BCTP, Battle Command Training Program, which really was their version of MSTP. And I’d been down to 18th Airborne Corps and a couple of other places, then, and looked into that. To me, it was a great idea. I mean—and when I went over to EuCom and I talked to generals like General Shalikashvili, Army generals. They would tell me more about that program, that it was designed to be nonthreatening, but to test everybody up to corps commanders, three stars, operationally, to be honest about flaws and faults, not to gloss it over, to do the training in a very realistic way, to be hard on the analysis and assessment and lessons learned and sort of evaluations, but you had to have people willing to grow, make mistakes, take chances. So I saw more of the effect of the program while I was in Europe, watching U.S. Army Europe and everything. So when I came back here, now, this is after the Gulf War. Of course, General Boomer was about to go up to be assistant commandant. He had just come back from commanding the MEF in Desert Storm. And General Boomer felt really strongly that the Marine Corps was behind the

power curve on this sort of stuff, that his experiences working with CentCom [Central Command] and working with the Army corps and [inaudible] the deep fight and all this, that there was a new thing out there. BCTP was working on it and we needed to get some sort of organization like that to do the same sort of thing. So he started the initial MSTP. General Van Riper, coming out of the Marine Corps University, initially had run it. It was kind of rudimentary first. I went with the team a couple of times on some of the training things, but we just got it started at that time and obviously it blossomed into what it is now. That's something I thought was very valuable later on as a MEF commander.

Allison: I've heard that it's one of the three most important things the Marine Corps has done since Vietnam.

Zinni: I think it's critically important. I think it's been extremely valuable. But it was one of the things that was then kicked off as I had come in and arrived, and I participated in the initial ones.

Allison: All right, sir. Thank you. And then in November '92, the Somalia operation is going. The United States decided to commit something there to support humanitarian operations, Provide Relief. Did you want to be part of that?

Zinni: Well, I was going out to Leavenworth. I was meeting with some of my Army counterparts out there. I think it was a doctrine discussion and a few other things, and just as I was getting ready to leave, we suddenly heard—now, this was after the election, but . . . Bush [was] still the president, obviously, had been defeated by President Clinton. But there was a lot on the news, Christiane Amanpour and CNN and others out there, about the situation in Somalia, the starvation, the militias, the UN

unable to act and this catastrophe. We began to hear that the president was inclined now to do something, and I traveled out to Leavenworth and I'm listening to the news and I'm hearing—I get out there, there's a good friend of mine, Army General [W.] Mike Steele, and by the time they get out there, he was hearing from his contacts at the Pentagon that had come down to look at two options. They were going to put in a JTF, and a joint task force headquarters. They're trying to decide whether it's either going [to] be 18th Airborne Corps or I MEF. So I had—of course, my experience with Provide Comfort and humanitarian operations and all the things we learned about joint operations and running the JTF training program for EuCom and all that. I called back to General Krulak and I said, “Look, I have all that experience back there. If I MEF needs some help, if I can go out and help with the planning, I can go out and be part of this—I mean, we learned a lot of lessons on dealing with NGOs, on humanitarian missions, on JTF formation. I'd be glad to go out and talk to them, if it's what General [Robert B.] Johnston would like. And I don't want to step on anybody's toes, but be glad to at least provide what I learned from it, if the Marine Corps gets the mission.” General Krulak got all excited about it because he liked this idea of Quantico reaching out to the FMF, providing what we need. He said, “I think it's a great idea.” He says, “I think it ought to be more than that. I mean if General Johnston accepts you, you ought to go out there and be part of this thing, to contribute in some capacity.” So I got back from Leavenworth, I came back, and I got a call from General Mundy—he was the commandant—he said, “I talked to General Johnston, and I told him I want you out there. Maybe you could be chief of staff of the JTF,” because obviously you could put an Army two star underneath—”You could be chief of staff and you ought to be

part of that thing and everything.” And I said, “Well, that’s fantastic. I mean, great. I want to do this. I’d love to go.” And I knew General Johnston was going to be for it. We were very close friends and I thought, “This will be great.” And then General Johnston called me and he said, “Look, I got sort of a touchy thing I want to talk to you about, see if it’s okay, but I don’t want you to be my chief of staff. I want you to be my director of operations, my J-3.” He said, “Now, it’s awkward because you’re a brigadier general and my chief’s a colonel, but I really need you in operations. I need your expertise there. I don’t need you in the chief.” I said, “Hey, that’s fine with me. I’d rather be in operations than the chief.” That’s not going to be a problem, and the JTF, we didn’t know what it was going to grow into. So I packed my things, flew out to Pendleton. Everybody believed this would be a short operation, a couple of weeks long, maybe a month, just to kind of get the security situation nailed down and then we would move. So I went out to Camp Pendleton, spent about a week and a half out there, where we went through the planning. Actually, on the way out there, I had to go down to CentCom first, because General Johnston was coming in for a briefing, and I got a ride with General [Joseph P.] Hoar, who was the commander in chief [CinC] of CentCom, on his plane and I was talking on the plane about our experiences, the CMOC [combined military operations center], all this stuff. And he thought, “Boy, this is invaluable.” So I hooked up with General Johnston really at Tampa, and then went to Pendleton. And then we did nine days worth of planning there, and of course they had been planning that they had kicked off with their ship, came in as the 3, and the plan was for us to go to Tampa, brief our final plan, and then fly out to Mogadishu. The MEU was now off the coast. Greg Newbold commanded the MEU. The MEU

would land the day before we got there, secure the airfield, the port, and other places. Then we would come in behind it. Then there would be an airflow of reinforcements, other ships coming, and everything else. So we go down to CentCom headquarters and brief our plan, and General Hoar said it looked like this was going to end up under a UN banner. It would be a U.S.-led coalition, but the coalition was beginning to form. There were people signing up. And his idea was what he called a 3-3-1. He wanted three African countries, three countries from the Gulf to participate, and one other Western country. So the Canadians had signed up. They had a task force in the area. They were headed there, sort of a small brigade. It looked like they were going to get the Saudis, the Kuwaitis, and Emiratis who eventually came. They would come down and Botswana, Nigeria, and Zimbabwe looked like they were going to sign up. So it looked like we had what was going to amount to an eight-nation coalition. So we take off after briefing General Hoar, and we're in the air and we get a call that the French have decided to contribute to this.

Allison: A lot of experience in that part of the world.

Zinni: And the French are in Djibouti, and they're ready to move down. And then we get a call that the French political leadership decides that the French general has to land before General Johnston. And General Johnston said, "No, he's not. The Marines control the airfield. I'm landing first." And so we land on the ground and the French general came in. He was a wonderful general, General [Delhomme?], and of course that wasn't his doing. That was the politics of it. And the French came down with a contingent of Legionnaires and they had aircraft and they had French paras and paratroops and other things. It ended up being a big contribution. But what was

happening now with the U.S. in there as the lead, all of a sudden, we're getting a lot of people signing up. As a matter of fact, before we left seven months later, we had 26 nations providing forces on the ground and it was up to 44 still signed up to provide more, so it became a real management problem from a coalition aspect and nothing like the 3-3-1. It blossomed way out of line with that.

Allison: Which is what you want. You want a lot of support, right?

Zinni: You do, but on coalition operations, you have people that show up just for the attendance points that don't contribute much, or you have people that come with minimal capabilities, and although they're well intentioned, the support requirements make it more of a burden. You have others that come that don't fit. They're not interoperable. It's hard to deal with them. So we were suffering from a glut of forces, and it was getting harder to figure out where to put them and how to marry them up, to join them together. Because you'd get some big forces, brigade-sized, some small little contingents and where they fit and who they might report to, so it became a real art to sell an area of responsibility to and then sell an organization or a structure they could buy into.

Allison: That was one of your jobs, one of your main jobs. I had a question, though, about just the whole concept and the historical significance of the United States doing this. Wasn't this historically significant in the sense that this was the first time the United Nations had used their Chapter VII?

Zinni: Well, they hadn't used Chapter VII, yet.

Allison: That comes later?

Zinni: Well, there was a UN operation on the ground, called UNOSOM I [United Nations Operation Somalia], which was a Chapter VI, and basically it was one battalion of Pakistanis at the airfield and, of course, it wasn't working. It didn't have a Chapter VII peace enforcement charter, and so it basically was frozen. It couldn't do anything. There was a small operation that General Frank Libutti was running out of Mombasa, trying to bring in aid to some of the remote areas. So when we came in, it was under a UN resolution, but we were not blue helmet. We were not UN. So it was a U.S. coalition that was doing Chapter VII peace enforcement.

Allison: Peace enforcement.

Zinni: But not under a UN command structure and anything else. Now, UNOSOM II, which replaced us, was the Chapter VII, that General [Cevik] Bir, a Turkish general, commanded and Ambassador Jonathan Howe was the special representative to the secretary general. But that didn't come until seven months later.

Allison: I see. That's what makes this kind of complex and interesting, but also very complex sort of web. It's a shifting sort of a thing.

Zinni: When I went back to cover the withdrawal, United Shield, when I was Task Force United Shield, I was not part of the United Nations, but when I went ashore and we landed, the United Nations actually chopped their forces, UN forces, to me. And so I had this strange sort of situation in that I didn't report to the United Nations, but I controlled United Nations forces. And, actually, Kofi Annan, who was the head of the peace team, came out and gave me a blue beret, because I had the United Nations forces under me. So there were a lot of strange things that went on—unusual things in that operation.

Allison: That's what makes it very interesting, but also very historically significant. One of the things on setting up the command and control. Was MarForPac [Marine Forces Pacific] ever part of the command, the chain of command, General [Henry C.] Stackpole?

Zinni: No, General Johnston was designated joint combined task force commander and reported directly to General Hoar, the commander of CentCom. MarForPac is still the Marine component commander, but when you form a JTF, the JTF comes normally right under the combatant commander, unified commander, and not under a component. Now, strangely enough, when we did United Shield, I was the JTF commander. I was commanding I MEF at the time. But because of the distance, General [J. H. Binford] Peay wanted greater responsiveness. He did put the JTF command under the Navy component commander out there. It was unusual. I don't think it was ever done that way before, but he did it just because of command and control and support requirements and because of the naval nature of the withdrawal. It was the last true amphibious operation, amphibious, withdrawing from a hostile beach, we had conducted since Korea.

Allison: So it's sort of a mix-and-match kind of a thing, whatever's most appropriate.

Zinni: Yes.

Allison: Was there any particular issues that you were aware of in setting the staff up? I mean, you're having to recreate the staff here.

Zinni: Yes, of course, we go out there with the I MEF staff and then we have to joint-ize it, if you will. So we now get augmentation from the other services and we begin to fill in some spots with other service representation. The deputy was an Army two-star

commander, Army aviation officer that came in. Our 2, again, it was an Army officer, and so we had a mix. Now, we started to get—my deputy initially was an Army colonel in the 3 shop, so we started to get a mix of all services in there. And then, of course, as the coalition built up, we started to get liaison and staff members that were from the coalition. We had Canadian officers and French officers and others. So the staff and the liaisons to the staff, then, began to have an international flavor, after we started to set up the staff. We landed behind the MEU when they took the airfield and port. They also provided security on the old American embassy, which was all gutted and burned out. We decided to establish our JTF, our CTF [combined task force] headquarters there, so we went into the old embassy compound and set it up in there. And then the staff started to grow, as the size of the force grew, too.

Allison: But it worked fine. I mean, no growing pains or anything.

Zinni: No, and of course we had a lot of NGOs on the ground. It was actually to be 120 NGO organizations, nongovernmental organizations. We set up the CMOC, Civil-Military Operations Center. We had a Marine colonel, Kevin Kennedy, that ran it, another Marine Corps colonel, Bob McPherson, and a Marine lieutenant colonel, Buddy Tillet, that were our key people down in there. So we had an Army civil affairs and Marine civil affairs group, and then working with the NGOs, working with the United Nations, the humanitarian operations center and pulling it together. And also on the ground was the representative of the president of the United States, and we obviously didn't have a diplomatic mission in there at the time. That had been evacuated by Marines in Operation Eastern Exit before that, and so Ambassador Bob Oakley, who had been ambassador to Somalia in a past life, also ambassador to Pakistan and other

places, he came in as the senior State Department presidential envoy. We had a really good blending of personalities and Bob Oakley, Ambassador Bob Oakley, Lieutenant General Bob Johnston and Phil Johnson, who was the president of CARE, who ran the humanitarian operations center, came in. And those three really cooperated, got along well. It was the best example of sort of humanitarian, political, security missions. And they sort of formed an executive committee. At my level, we [were] operational [on a] day-to-day basis and so the beginning of the operation, as we were sort of getting our way through this—and it was a lot of friction with NGOs and others, and still had this other UN command there. As we were sorting it out, it really helped that we had these three guys at the top that really cooperated with each other, really supported each other in a great way. Ambassador Oakley wanted to get into the political reconstruction, formed each political committee, security committees, judiciary committees. He didn't have a lot of people. He just had a handful. And General Johnston agreed that we would help him. So many of the officers we had supported that worked in that with him, provided the membership of the committees along with his people. So [in] the beginning, we were really plowing new ground on this military and nonmilitary, security and nonsecurity functions in there, the interaction.

We came in and we knew that the major mission was to lay down a security blanket, because we had these gangs and militias that were seizing humanitarian goods, threatening the NGOs. There were all sorts of shootouts. We had to set up security and freeze the southern half of Somalia, and in 19 days we got out to every region, and [established] the flow of food, medicine, water, shelter. In 19 days, we had gotten it all in the size of the state of Texas and controlled it and controlled all the road

networks and everything else and moved it out. The 10th Mountain Division came down there, and of course had the 1st Marine Division elements of that and then the other coalition forces.

Allison: Was that pretty much on schedule, 19 days to do that?

Zinni: It was a lot faster than we thought.

Allison: Okay?

Zinni: And again, the MEU under Greg Newbold really shot out and took a lot of the initial stuff. We were able to fill in behind him, and we used the advantage of a coastline and the MEU, going in to some of the southern parts, and the French and the Canadians were, again, really high speed, moved out. The French went all the way out to some of the remotest areas, along the Ethiopian borders, as did the Canadians. And, eventually, we formed eight [of] what we called humanitarian support areas or regions, or whatever. We liked to use milder terms than military terms. We formed nine of them and we either had a U.S. unit or a major coalition unit in charge, and then others in the coalition, chopped TaCon or in support in those areas, so nine total.

Allison: What was your main job? You had mentioned working with the NGOs and setting up the CMOC, or the HMOC [humanitarian-military operations center]. Did you have another main function?

Zinni: Well, I had the traditional director of operations job. In other words, the operational planning, doing the planning for how we were going to conduct military operations. I also was responsible—the CMOC reported to me, so I was responsible for connecting with the humanitarian and NGO side and ensuring that we were coordinating with them. And then I had the main responsibility also of working with Ambassador

Oakley and his people and coordinating the political and the mediation, working with the refugees on that side of it on his side. So it was a military, a humanitarian, and then sort of a political mix of what we were doing. Then I also got the duty of connecting to the militias. So I was sort of the one that dealt with Aidid and Ali Mahdi and all that and met with them and their committees and their senior security people and political committees. And then, eventually, when we reestablished the police, the United Nations did not want a Somali in charge of the police. They wanted oversight, so I became the chief of police in Somalia and Mogadishu. I actually still have my beret and everything. So I ran the police force that we were working with. We had to be a little careful with that, because by American law, military can't train police, so we used some coalition police trainees and some other things in the way we worked it. But we had sort of oversight of that whole process.

Allison: What about the big issue was disarmament or weapons control?

Zinni: When we first arrived, I mean, just the very next day, we met with the two major warlords of Mogadishu, because we had to make sure we could use Mogadishu. We had to get through Mogadishu from the port and airfield, and so we had this meeting and this understanding and this agreement, which probably was an attempt for Oakley to start a political process. The agreement basically said we would freeze everything in place. Wherever these militias are now, it's frozen in place; so they negotiate where they are. Guarantees on us being able to move back and forth through their areas and resupply. Of course, it was not just militias. There were these gangs that were out there, too. You had rogue militias that you had to deal with. They were really thugs, and they weren't controllable. The militias themselves had dustups between them, and

we would have some dustups with them. But this whole area of how we deal with them and our interaction with them became important in setting the initial methods and the way we would approach them and deal with them and coordinate with them, too. What was the question?

Allison: Disarmament.

Zinni: So part of it, we wanted to lay down a set of rules regarding weapons, and of course the militias were resistant to this. They controlled their areas. They had weapons. So the rules we came up with is they were not allowed to have out and exposed and on the streets heavy weapons. They had to be cantoned. They could control their weapons, they could keep their own weapons, but their heavy weapons had to be in cantonments that we would inspect, and they agreed with that. Of course, they had a lot of other hidden ones, and sometimes we ran into them. We took them out, because they understood we would take them out if they were not in cantonments, accounted for and on their inventory. Small arms, personal weapons, could not be publicly out. In other words, those things—it was obviously difficult to control that. There were so many of them, there were arms markets. We would confiscate or confront anyone with weapons, and we would go after the arms markets—there were two of them in Mogadishu—and take those down. Of course, they kept popping up. We kept taking them down. But there was no visible small arms. All heavy weapons had to be cantoned. Anything that didn't comply with that, we would deal with. So we would collect weapons. We would find them out there. We would destroy them. So that was the disarmament policy in a nutshell.

Allison: Was that—I know from doing an investigation or research into this that this was not necessarily how the UN thought that weapons should be controlled. Any comments on the UN view?

Zinni: Here was the problem when we went in there. We had people dying by the tens, if not more, of thousands. We had to get food and relief supplies out there. If we were going to fight, then you're not going to provide humanitarian assistance. So if we were to demand that these militias give up their weapons and we were going to confiscate them or confront them, we were going to go to war. And do you go to war ...?

Allison: Because they weren't going to give them up.

Zinni: They weren't going to give them up, and then there would be a confrontation. And so we had to go and fight or accomplish our mission, which was to provide security and get the humanitarian relief distribution network functioning and secure. So this was the immediate requirement, and of course the theory was, as they resolved their issues down the road and the interim government came together, they could make the decisions about weapons and disarmament. So, yes, there was a difference with the UN, but the UN could have all the theories they want. They couldn't implement anything on the ground. They couldn't even later on. And we had a higher-priority mission, just getting out to those traumatized people, and it was tough enough going out because there was fighting by the non-militia gangs and everything, and security. We didn't land there to go to war with the militias, and that's what that would have meant, had we had a more stringent disarmament policy.

Allison: So the UN was more thinking about—I know there's lots of nuances to this, but it seems like the UN was more interested in a long-term nation-building ...

Zinni: Initially, the U. was interested in us taking this. Initially, Secretary General Boutros-Ghali's representative, Ambassador [Khatani?] in there, they didn't want to touch this with a 10-foot pole. We were in there. We were in charge, we believed, just for a short time like a month, then pass it back to the UN. They would upgrade their capability, go into a Chapter VII, and take it. They wanted no parts of it. They were fully happy with us doing this, and they liked throwing crap over the transom and telling us what to do, but they weren't interested in taking this. In the words of Ambassador [Khatani], "This is like a poison apple. We're not going to accept it." When they finally accepted it, of course, it meant that a large U.S. military presence had to remain, 10th Mountain Division, U.S. logistics support, and everything else. So they bled that out of the administration and just said, "We're not going to take it over." So they didn't really want any parts of it. And, of course, when they did come in, it basically was, again, a U.S.-led mission with Jonathan Howe and Tom Montgomery as the deputy under General Bir, but still in command of U.S. forces. All the logistics provided by the U.S. under General [Billy K.] Solomon and then a different approach to the warlords. They did force a confrontation with the warlords. Then we had Black Hawk down day and all the consequences of that.

Allison: But that was later on.

Zinni: That was later on.

Allison: Early on, they were not interested in doing anything in Somalia?

Zinni: No, the UNOSOM I just sat there. UNOSOM I just sat there. We had no coordination. They couldn't coordinate. It was not the fault of the Pakistani battalion. They would have loved to. They were under a UN charter and basically it was a strained

relationship, I would say. We thought that maybe they could take over pieces of the mission, non-military, like putting the police back on the street. The police were coming back; they were on the streets. They were a positive effect. We wanted to support them and help them. We obviously couldn't do the police training. We said, "How about if you just take these things?" They refused flat out: "Not in our charter, we're not going to do it."

Allison: So they were just going to have the goods dumped in there?

Zinni: Well, the goods came through the NGOs and basically . . .

Allison: Provide Relief operation?

Zinni: Well, not just Provide Relief. We subsumed it; it became under us then. But they would bring in relief supplies into Mogadishu. The NGOs were doing it, and NGOs needed security. They had hired their own security. We vetted them, gave them green cards. Some of them were a little shaky, so we sort of oversaw that security piece, too.

Allison: Interesting.

Zinni: A lot of friction between us and the NGOs. NGOs, I think in a lot of cases, wanted to take sides, thought that maybe our job should be to go to war with the militias, which was stupid, because you wouldn't have been able to deliver goods. A lot of them were envious of us, because when we came in, even though it wasn't a humanitarian mission—ours was just security. They did the humanitarian mission. They thought we were getting credit for humanitarian relief and all when they had been there long before, suffered casualties. So there were a lot of strained relations that started right from the beginning, and we tried our darnedest to connect to them and do things, but in some cases it worked. In some cases, it was more difficult. To the credit of Colonel

Kennedy and the people down at the CMOC, they did a lot to bridge the gap there, and some of the NGOs, too, really reached out. Some couldn't relate to the military directly, because they have to retain an image of neutrality, like the Red Cross, or faith-based institutions that can't, by their foundation, associate directly. So we just sort of shared information. Others clearly would. Others chose not to. But we set up a network and a way to communicate and at least provided information, willing to provide coordination, willing to provide security where they needed it and where they needed to go.

Two different cultures, different mentality. They had something like 525 facilities in Mogadishu, spread all over the city, warehouses, offices, residences. We tried to encourage them to consolidate. It would be easier for us, for security. They felt that that was us intruding and dictating to them things. They refused to do it. We didn't have the force to provide security for every single one of them, so we basically decided to try to provide an overall secure environment, a blanket, allow them to keep their own hired security and operate within it.

Allison: These guys could carry personal sidearms and guns.

Zinni: Their security forces could, if they wanted to. We just issued them green cards and authorized them to do it, but they were vetted.

Allison: That's very interesting, that first meeting with Somali leaders. You ended up working quite a bit with Aidid. Could you characterize him?

Zinni: Yes, he was a general in his own right. He wasn't like some colonial sergeant that took over and declared himself a general for life. He was the general, educated in war colleges in Italy and in Russia. He was commander of the Somali forces in the Ogaden

War with the Ethiopians, the only Somali general with any real operational success. He had a reputation of being tactically sound. He had been ambassador to India, and so he had a diplomatic position under Siad Barre government. So the guy was credible, in terms of his military and diplomatic background. He defeated Siad Barre and his forces in the revolution, and saw himself as the logical heir. Ali Mahdi came in while he was out fighting and sort of usurped his position in the political organization, and then they went to war. Then the 13 other—13 or so other factions rose up, so you had these warlords and militias, out there that were at each others' throats and making alliances, breaking them, fighting them, and Mogadishu was split in two between north and south. [Mohamed Farrah] Aidid controlled the south. So the first meeting, we attempted to bring the two together, and it was in south Mogadishu and we had guarantee from Ali Mahdi's security—he wasn't too happy. He was really sweating BBs when we came in there. But we got them to sign an agreement to basically work with us and freeze their things in place and not confront each other. Of course, that wasn't always held up. There were all sorts of skirmishes and things going on. But we were part of that. We met with all the militia leaders, but particularly those two, because those were right around the area of our headquarters, the airfield, the city of Mogadishu, and the capital. And, like I said, one of my jobs was continuous liaison in communication with him and Ali Mahdi and their militia leaders, if you will.

Allison: Was it pretty daunting to go out and meet with these guys?

Zinni: Yes, they were tough. They were rebels. They had been fighting for a long time. There were a lot of hard faces. They were pretty ruthless and all, but I'd go over to see him at his compound and I'd bring my platoon or so of Marines over there and stare down

their guys. A couple of times we brought over women Marines that were armed to the teeth and that kind of took them back. I've got to say, our relationship was tense at times. There were issues, but it was cooperative. I mean, and I worked with his people. In some cases, with some of his people, we established pretty good relationships, trusted each other. I had one incident where, when the UN first came in, his general that I dealt with, the head of his security forces, had cautioned me. He said—the UN had white vehicles. Ours were green, or camouflaged. And he said, “Look, a heads-up.” He said, “There’s some people in the organization, some in the militias, subordinate militias, that are going to attack white vehicles if they are out by themselves.” He said, “Make sure all the UN vehicles have a green”—meaning your—”vehicles with them, and they won’t be attacked.” Because he said some outfits you can’t control and all. So they would give us a heads-up on things like that. Of course, then, the UN didn’t listen and Tom Montgomery’s vehicle got shot up because his driver went out on his own, without accompaniment of ours.

Allison: Montgomery, he was there later, right?

Zinni: Yes, as the UN came in. This was as the UN was coming in.

Allison: Would you say your relationship with Aidid and Ali Mahdi, for that two years, was better than the UN’s? Why?

Zinni: Oh, yes, without a doubt.

Allison: Why?

Zinni: Well, because, we weren’t there to go to war with them.

Allison: It seemed like the UN wanted to.

Zinni: Oh, the UN wanted to, or they wanted a confrontation to try to marginalize them or pick sides, and we weren't there to pick sides. We were there to help them decide on their government. That's what Oakley's position was. We'll help you, as long as you're not doing anything unacceptable. If you do, then you've got a problem, but as long as you cooperate and you work with us, we're not going to go in there and try to dismantle you or attack you or determine who the Somalis should have. You all have a seat at the table in this thing. And so that was how we operated the [change] under the United Nations.

Allison: Well, your mission was just to protect the flow of relief, of goods, right?

Zinni: That was it. But we got into mission creep. And pretty soon we were stuck. President Bush came out to visit us and of course he was getting ready for the inauguration of President Clinton, and when he came out, no one was telling us what we were doing. We had now been there over a month and we were supposed to have left after three weeks. We were asking President Bush, are we handing this off to the UN? What was the plan . . . it was clear there was no plan. And he turned to Marlon Fitzwater and Brent Scowcroft said, "Are we turning this over to the UN?" Oh, crap. So what was meant to be about a three-week operation turned into seven months and waiting for the UN to takeover. Even when the UN came in, they refused to chop that UN forces now, because all the UNITAF [United Task Force] forces had left us [and] chopped them to their own people. The UN forces actually reported to Bob Johnston and us while they weren't supposed to be under our command. UN forces came in, their staff, the military staff, refused to take control, so for six weeks, while the UN was there, we actually commanded their forces and their staff sat next to us, advised but did not

accept authority. So Bob Johnston and about 50 of us, I guess, in the staff, we were commanding the UN forces. It was ridiculous.

Allison: That must have been a very uneasy feeling.

Zinni: It was, and the relations a little strained. When Admiral [Jonathan T.] Howe came in, he felt strongly that UNITAF, or Restore Hope, shouldn't leave. He wanted us to stay, and so he wanted this united UNITAF force, plus the UN force and, of course, that's not what we were told. That's not our orders. We were leaving. It was now a UN mission, so it was kind of a strange set of circumstances, and the relationships were strained right from the beginning, with Ambassador [Khatani] and then with Ambassador Howe on this whole deal. Their approach to things was very different than ours. They were becoming very aggressive, very hostile, wanted to take out the radio stations and do these other things that we didn't think was—as a matter of fact, the day we left, Bob Johnston, as we were leaving and going down to the airport to catch our plane, we just had two HMMWVs [high mobility, multipurpose, wheeled vehicle], things were quiet. Bob Johnston stopped. He said, "Stop here." There were two kids, two Somali kids on the street corner. He said, "Give me all your pens and pencils." He was giving them to the kids, and he just stood there, looking sort of off in the distance. And I went up to him, I said, "General Johnston, what are you thinking about?" He turned to me and he said, "In 30 days, this place is going to go up in smoke." Thirty-one days later, the attack that led to all the problems and eventually Black Hawk down day started. I mean, he was prescient and knew that their approach was wrong, confrontational, aggressive, not working with the parties toward peace, sort of putting into play their version of what should go on, much more hostile toward

things like the radio station and everything. We would battle the radio station on the air. We had our own radio station, our own newspaper. Aidid would get pissed at us; I'd go see him. He'd be complaining about our paper. We called it "Rajo," "Hope" in Somali. He called it "trouble," which was a word that sounded like that. And I would tell him, "Lower your rhetoric, we'll lower ours, or else we're going to have this war of words." They wanted to have a different kind of war, and so the tensions mounted with the United Nations. It got really bad and one match would set that place off. And, of course, they're sort of walking in on a Friday, telling them on a Friday night they're coming the next day to inspect the station where the radio station is, with all those tensions. Big mistake, the Pakistanis get ordered out there. There's a confrontation; some Somalis are killed. They're breaking the radio station. On the way home, people rush into the streets, kill them, kill many of their soldiers, wipe them out at the feeding stations and then you have the war that began that ended up with Black Hawk down day.

Allison: How much did PSYOPS play a part?

Zinni: Yes. We had a great PSYOPS commander, Army PSYOPS commander there, Lieutenant Colonel [Bianchini?], and he reported to me at the 3. We were running a radio station, producing a newspaper, preparing the leaflets. He worked in very close coordination. The teams were right on the money. And, actually, that was like an arm of our power out there on the streets. It became very strong. We paid a lot of attention to those themes and a lot of attention to the means of delivering all that. And, like I said, the way we offset the radio and the other incitement activities was through our own, and so we were able not to have to be reduced to just the military confrontation.

Allison: The relationship, the bad relationship with the UN and Aidid how much was based on animosities because Boutros-Ghali was Egyptian.

Zinni: It was based on two things. One, right after—the UN had put in a mandate, when the Somalis felt the British and Italian colonial period had ended and they should go to immediate independence. The UN put in a mandate under British and Italian control, so it went back after World War II, and the Somalis did not like the UN because of the mandate not to give immediate independence. Boutros-Ghali, the secretary general of the UN, had been the deputy foreign minister in Egypt and the Somalis believed—this was kind of myth-lore, that they had cut a deal with Siad Barre, the former dictator, to move a million Egyptian sort of poor into the Juba Valley to take over, to settle the area. And that rumor went around. So you had that anti-Boutros-Ghali—as a matter of fact, when he would come to visit, they would riot in the streets in there, and it was terrible, and it's difficult to control. So there was not a natural liking for the UN and, then particularly, for Boutros-Ghali.

Allison: Was there a personal grudge between Boutros-Ghali and Aidid? Was there some personal animosity there?

Zinni: Well, I think the personal thing kind of goes back to whatever relationships with Siad Barre that they had imagined existed or whatever. And it was clear the UN did not see Aidid as having a seat at the table or being part of the succession, where our view was, that's up to the Somalis. We don't pick and choose who's in charge.

Allison: You weren't there to pick sides, so that's where you talked about mission creep. Later on, the idea comes, we're going to institute democracy and build a new nation there, and that came in with the UN.

Zinni: Right, exactly.

Allison: Can you briefly—or not briefly, in as much detail as you like, talk about any confrontations, any clashes early on between UNITAF and the . . .

Zinni: Yes, I mean, first of all, the title, UNITAF, because we were Combined Task Force Restore Hope until the UN Special Representative [Khatani] said that's an unacceptable term. If you ever think the UN is going to take over—you have to change it. And we were trying to figure out, what do you mean it's unacceptable. He said, "We will not accept a term, combined task force." It's a military term, what's wrong with it? He didn't know, but he said, "You have to call yourself UNITAF." So, of course, we were trying to get this thing passed off to the UN, so you want us to call it UNITAF? We're UNITAF. UNITAF is not a name we chose; it was kind of, for some weird reason, what he wanted to do.

Allison: But it had United Nations connotations to it.

Zinni: I guess. So we called ourselves UNITAF from then on. We didn't care. What's in a name? And we were able to do that. It was not a safe place. There were firefights. We lost a first casualty, a Marine in the streets of Mogadishu on a patrol, then lost some others to a mine. So there were casualties along the way. There were confrontations with some of the rogue militias, morian gangs. We had one confrontation with one of Aidid's militias. I had come to know that Aidid liked to portray this idea that he had this huge force and they were all loyal to him and they were kind of all block and wire diagrammed in. But his people would tell me there are some militias that are sort of associated with us that we sort of count that way. We really don't have control over them. And they would tell me which ones are a little bit more rogue and on their own

that are not really part of theirs, to be careful with. We had one cantonment that was right outside of Mogadishu that we had some problems. There had been some shooting and stuff that went on. One time, some Marines coming back on a vehicle patrol had been fired on; so we took the compound out. General Wilhelm and the 1st Marine Division took it out. This caused a big dustup. I had a meeting with the Security Council with the senior Aidid militia commanders. I went in and I said, “We have to make a decision right here. If we’re at war, fine, tell me and we’re at war. If not, and you accept responsibility for that action and we want to put it behind us. We paid the price. We took them out and all their equipment, then fine it’s behind us. You tell me. I’ll step outside, and I’ll come back in.” I came back in and they said, “No war. Let’s put it behind us.” So we moved on.

Allison: Did he—how well did the Marines do there, I mean, as far as operating in that kind of environment?

Zinni: Really well. Colonel [Emil R.] Bedard, later Lieutenant General “Buck” Bedard, commanded the 7th Marines, which was really the ground component of the Marine component.

Allison: In Mogadishu.

Zinni: In Mogadishu, and he had Mogadishu, which is the toughest humanitarian support area, the city, and he ran it with an iron fist. He was legendary amongst the Somalis. I mean he was the mayor of Mogadishu. Had some good forces with him beside his own Marines, had the Botswanans and Zimbabweans. And also the Marines had the most difficult place, way out in Bardera, out on the Ethiopian border, really desolate area, tough to control, and they had that area out there, too. So, clearly in my mind, the

Marines had the toughest areas of responsibility, in terms of terrain, infrastructure, and then potential hostile action. And that's not to play down the others, but they clearly had the toughest areas of responsibility that were given to them, and did a magnificent job. Colonel Sullivan who ran the Bardera operation, an amtrac commander, he had sent back to his wife at Camp Pendleton and he wanted all kinds of T-shirts and material that were bright yellow. So they sent him all kinds of T-shirts that were yellow, material that was yellow, shirts that were yellow. And these stick people—I mean, literally starving to death, would come into the camps and they would feed them and take care of them, start to get them back to health. Sort of the ones that were moved into the camps and really coming along, he would give them the yellow T-shirts, give the women the yellow cloth for their sorts of dresses they made. And when you went out there in this sort of desolate brown, dusty, desert kind of area, you'd see these seas of yellow, people and kids playing and people really doing well. He just thought the color generated a morale, a sense of community—which was true. You could see it. So very innovative. General Bedard in a way controlled Mogadishu. This big effort to go after the arms bazaars, really had control and connected everything. It's interesting what he did. He established three reaction forces inside the town in three different locations. If an incident occurred, he would decide which one to call to react and which different—and he had different routes they could use. So we'd call reaction force three on a blue route, and as soon as they would react to the trouble, of course, they would fade away. And I later, in talking to Aidid—this is after Black Hawk down day, he said, “You know,” because I wanted to talk about the tactics. He said, “In the day when you were here, no one knew where the reaction force was

coming from.” He said, “When the UN was here, the reaction force was the airport, only one road out.” So when we had the political meetings, the Black Hawk down, they put an ambush in off that road and they hit the reaction force coming out, so they couldn’t get to the special ops guys.

Allison: Very predictable.

Zinni: Yes.

Allison: That’s something I was going to ask about—the difference between the Marine security and Army security later on. I guess that’s a good example of that.

Zinni: I’m not critical. We had some great leaders. I mean the 10th Mountain Division did a heck of a job, General [Steven L.] Arnold and his brigade commanders, General [William E.] Ward and all that. I mean we took pride in the MEU commanders who were there and General Newbold, later, Colonel [Matthew E.] Broderick, later General Broderick did a lot of work on the Juba River and Kismayo and in a bad situation that deteriorated down there, really bailed it out. So each in their own way. As a Marine, of course, we’re really proud of what the Marines did in running the city in some of the most remote areas, some of the innovations. They really connected to people, were very adaptable. I think even by the determination of the press, they always saw the Marines as more easily able to deal within a strange culture and connected really well, understood the people, had a better interaction, knew when to be firm, knew when not to be. The Marines later on were the ones who wanted to introduce nonlethal capabilities. We went back and put in all these nonlethal capabilities. The Marines wanted the options. There was a little resistance by other forces to that sort of thing, but the Marines wanted to say we know when to use force and when to use these other

things. We want a broader scope of capabilities, which we tried to accommodate. We took a lot of heat over that, but it was the Marines that wanted it. It was the troops that wanted the capabilities.

Allison: The nonlethal.

Zinni: Yes.

Allison: Was that the beginning of your interest in it?

Zinni: Yes, because we saw the need for it on the streets, for riot control and people control and other things in situations where you don't want to just have the only resort being an M16. And as we got into looking at what was available and what we could use out there, and some of the more exotic nonlethals, we trained up on them before we went back out for United Shield. We used some of it. Some of it was kind of popularized, the sticky foam and the rubber bullets. We received some criticism from other quarters, the Army and others, that you can't have two mind-sets. You can't train soldiers and Marines to turn on the nonlethal, and one day you turn on the lethal. We had "60 Minutes" come down to Camp Pendleton to look at our training and they had asked the same questions. So I took all the troops, corporal and below, removed all the sergeants and above, and I said, "Go talk to the troops. Ask them." Because there were articles being written that Clinton had forced us to take nonlethal, or we had forced the troops to do it. So I said, "It came from the troops, they wanted it." But I said, "Talk to the troops." I took all the NCOs away, so just lance corporals and below. You go out there and you talk to them. I said to Steve Kroft, "Ask them if they wanted it, if they were forced on it." And he came back and he said, "They wanted it. They felt they needed it." The one—he said he asked one Marine, well, there's a comment that this is

going to confuse you, when do you use your rifle, when do you use a sticky foam or a rubber bullet or some other type of—he said the Marine looked at him and said, “I know when to shoot and when to use antiriot—I’m trained to do that.” So he said, “Hey, I’ve got it.”

Allison: Media. You are talking about the media here. That was always a big issue. Any comments on the media in this whole thing.

Zinni: Through the whole course of that, even to United Shield, I felt overall we had a good relationship with the media. I made a lot of friends out there, people that came from the media. We built a trust system. Later on in United Shield, I had a media pool. I promised them I would get them to the action, and they were very happy with the relationship. I wanted to be open with the media, give them access. We had several incidences where some of the media got onto things that were classified or capabilities that we didn’t want divulged. They discovered them, we asked them not to report it, and they didn’t. And I promised those reporters good stories and access. They weigh every warning because they were conscientious about it. If they got onto something that was going to be published and it looked negative, they always came to us with an opportunity to provide a balanced view to it.

Eric Schmidt, *New York Times*, Donatella Lorch—there were a whole series of people throughout that that I still retain personal relationships that were very fair in what they did. The reporting was balanced. Even if there was criticism, the criticism, they made sure they had their facts right. They could draw their own opinions, as long as they got the right facts, and I would accept that. I thought the media, throughout Somalia, by and large—there’s always a few outliers—they were cooperative, they

were supportive, they told the story, not just U.S. media, but others. BBC did some great pieces on it. Like I said, none of the media—I mean, some of the media stuff was critical, but it was critical, either justifiably critical or at least the criticism was based on accuracy. They always gave us an opportunity to provide balance to the stories. They always wanted to connect to us and be out there. And so there really weren't many media issues, in my view, and negativity to the whole thing. At least in the beginning, under the UNITAF phase, and at the end—now, I know, of course, with the UN and that whole business that happened between with Continue Hope and the UN, UNOSOM II, that might have been a different story.

Allison: Yes, where you get into the very negative public opinion that comes out of something like this and tends to . . .

Zinni: Well, they were very antsy when we were going back in there with United Shield, and, of course, we had the insistence that there had to be a media pool. They don't like pools, but I thought the media pool was . . .

Allison: They don't like pools?

Zinni: No, they want to be on their own and free to go. They thought the—if they sign up to a pool, they're subject to our restrictions of where they can go and what they can see, so they very reluctantly did it. I told them—I got the pool together. I said, "You'll have access to all the commanders, as long as it doesn't interfere in our operation." I said, "I will promise you and guarantee you, I will put you at the scene of the action, if that's where you want it, with security considerations." They got great footage, top of the fold, right column. They were getting the hot stuff, and they told me that they liked it. As a matter of fact, at the end of United Shield, as we were leaving, the media pool

presented me with—one of them had taken a picture of me at night when we were under fire coming off the beach. It was one of the last reporters off before the last tracs left. And it was me, silhouetted against flares with the shooting going on, and they had all signed it and framed it and gave it to me.

Allison: Interesting, because in military circles the media has this very negative reputation.

Zinni: I've got to tell you, again, some of the relationships there they were friendships that were for life; people I still talk to. I didn't see any time we had a serious problem with the media. In fact, I had some good experiences, positive things that occurred. Now, I don't know about the middle piece and how that might have been answered in the UNOSOM II, Continued Hope phase of that. My only involvement in that was going back, getting [Chief] Warrant Officer [Michael] Durant out and the ceasefire and what not.

Allison: Do you have any comments on the ROE [rules of engagement] during the first phase?

Zinni: Yes, the ROE was a big issue in that phase. I think our judge advocates did a great job of putting together a good set of ROE. It gave us the freedom, the ability to act. It was very reasonable, from above. We of course put our piece into that. The judge advocates went around and Rick Lorenz, who was a Marine colonel judge advocate for I MEF oversaw that. We did ROE training with all the units. There was a problem with coalition ROE and our ROE, and our accountability and responsibility as a senior force. The Canadians had a problem, which in their own system they disbanded their airborne corps as a result of actions that went on there and sort of criticized. I actually thought the Canadians did a great job. But that was an incident that should have been punished and all that, but, unfortunately, it tainted what was a very good operation by

the Canadians. They had this series of incidents, and it brought up an issue about whose rules of engagement and how that all works, but we spent a lot of time with the Coalition partners, making sure it all matched up. We had several incidents that went to Article 32 investigation on violation of rules of engagement. The ones that went beyond that to a judicial thing I thought were fair. There was no issue about how they were determined. People that used good judgment, used force in reacting to it reasonably, were not punished in any way. The Article 32s exonerated them. The ones that went beyond that did go on to judicial proceedings.

Allison: Like the Marine that shot the Somali for stealing his sunglasses.

Zinni: For stealing his sunglasses. And we had another incident where there were Marines protecting a building and some Somalis came over the wall. The Marines grabbed their weapons and one of the Somalis reached into his waistband. He thought it might have been a weapon. They fired, killed the guy. In the Article 32, even though the guy didn't have a weapon, the whole act, which was seen by a number of people, was validated. He had to believe it was a hostile gesture, it was a hostile intent, and so it was justified in that. We had another example of a sergeant that was in charge of a convoy. Prior to going out on a convoy, we had a piece of intelligence that he was briefed on, some of the bad militias were going to give explosives to kids who swarmed, to try to get things off and steal things, and kids were going to be given explosives to put onto trucks. And he was on a truck behind a lead one and he saw this kid run up with this thing to put on the truck. And he yelled at the kid and warned him and fired warning shots and the kid was putting this thing on the truck and he thought it might have been an explosive. He had been briefed on this prior to the patrol going

out, or the convoy going out, and he shot the kid and he killed him. The poor sergeant was devastated by this, but the Article 32 exonerated him. He had a reasonable belief based on the intelligence briefing he had, saw the kid doing it, did not respond to the warnings, had to make a terrible decision, and made it, and it was justified. So I thought the rules of engagement and their enforcement were done reasonably, were done well. And then use of nonlethals presented a whole new set of how you use them and when you use them, beyond just lethal force. There had to be a set of rules of engagement on the nonlethals.

Allison: From early on in your career, you're talking about culture, and you picked that up in Vietnam. This just reemphasizes it.

Zinni: Yes, I believe a lot of things were done wrong later on, and we made every attempt to relate to them, to understand the culture, to meet with them, to study the culture. Of course, having the advantage of Oakley being there, having been ambassador there, that understood African culture, that particular culture, understanding the clan structure and how they operated, the way they thought. I mean we invested a lot in that sort of cultural understanding at that time. And, again, tried to do things within the culture, and that was very important in PSYOPS themes and other things that we did, too.

Allison: You had little time to adapt, to learn the culture, too, nine days or something.

Zinni: I came to the conclusion, if you get thrust into a culture you're not familiar with, we should be training our people how to template a structure. In other words, when I walk in, what do I need to know? From my experience in Vietnam, the Kurds and

everyplace else I've been exposed to different cultures, there are questions you learn to know to ask.

Who makes decisions? What kind of system do they have in terms of dealing with issues? What kind of judicial system? What kind of rule of law system? What's unique to their belief systems and the way they act? What kind of fundamental conceptual differences do they have? For example, the Somalis didn't have the concept of individual responsibility, only the clan could accept responsibility. So how do you deal with that? If it's a tribal or clan structure, what is that like? What does that mean and how does that interact with other things? How do they view themselves? As Somalis or is Somalia an artificial construct of some colonial period? It wasn't in Somalia. The Somalis believed there was a people called the Somali, and so it was a little different than some of the other African nations with colonial constructs and not real—that didn't match tribal or clan and align with them. So you know the questions to ask, or at least to find out, so you can dissect the culture pretty quickly.

Allison: Just because they're Africans doesn't mean that they're stereotypical Africans.

Zinni: Well, of course, they're not in the Horn of Africa, because they're a mix of black Africa, Bantu, and Arab. And there were Bantus, and they're looked down upon, so you have some internal friction in there, too. So you sort of have this—like the problem in Sudan with the Janjaweed and others. You have this sort of Arab-African mix that have a different relationship with black African ethnic groups. So you have to understand those complexities, too.

Allison: Plus the fact that they're about 90 percent Muslim, right? The implications of that.

Zinni: Yeah, I mean, obviously religious beliefs and how that works in. So understanding Islam and its impact and how it plays into what they do.

Allison: In a situation like that, can you say what the impact of Islam is?

Zinni: Well, you have to be sensitive to that. Obviously, the religious leaders play a much more important role, maybe, than other societies, where maybe religion and governance is separated. There, it might not be. In the village, the mullah might play a greater role than maybe a parish priest or minister or a rabbi would in other cultures, so you have to appreciate that. We had Muslim troops in the coalition, and so a lot of times when there were sensitive things, like searching mosques or doing other things, we would try to have a capability to use Muslims to do the things that might be more sensitive. So that's the benefit of understanding the culture. It allowed you to then do operational things in maybe a more culturally sensitive way that made it easier on all sides.

Allison: On Aidid, the fact that you had a lot to do with Aidid and negotiations and whatnot. I mean, the fact that you're working with Aidid, does that validate him? Does that give him leverage?

Zinni: No, we tried to balance it out working with all of them. There were obviously his enemies didn't like us working with him. He didn't like us working with his so-called enemies, and so it balanced out. They had different views of each other. We're talking about 15 different faction leaders, militias, warlords.

Allison: Throughout the country.

Zinni: Yes, and throughout the part of the country we had responsibility for. And the advantage of this connection to Aidid is I got to understand his personality. I think he

was schizophrenic, because there were times I'd go there, he'd have this sort of dark side, evil, ruthless side. Even his people around him would be fearful of him. When I would go when he was in that mood, one of his chief lieutenants, [Osmanado], who basically was the logistician for the force and the provider, he would tell me, "He's in a bad mood. Bad mood. This is not the time to be confrontational with him." We all suffered from that, and you didn't deal with him then. He was in a dangerous mood—if I found him in that mood, we were very matter of fact. We did our business. We laid it out and that was it. Then he had sort of another personality sometimes that I called his elder statesman personality, where you would go in and he would be pontificating. He would be talking in lofty terms and about government and all this stuff, and it was kind of a preachy—he was in an okay mood to deal with him, but you didn't get much business done, because he was listening to himself talk. He was giving you a lot of theory and concepts and idealism and all this stuff. It wasn't very productive, but it wasn't hostile. And then his other personality was sort of a very practical, actually friendly personality, very reasonable. And when you found him in that sort of mood, you made the deals. You could do the deals. You could lay down the rules. You could discuss things that you had to do. So you had to catch him at the right moment, and I also realized you can move him from one mood to another.

A bad thing happened when I went back with United Shield. We decided that we should go out and meet with the warlords and sort of lay down the rules in a very collegial, very friendly way, but basically tell the warlords, "Look, we're here to come to withdraw the UN. We're not looking for a fight. If there is a fight, we're going to go at it. We're going to have at it. This is not the UN. United Shield is not the UN, and

we'll go at it and we'll destroy you, but we don't want to get there. This is a withdrawal. We'll be gone. No sense for a fight." So we go to all the warlords; they're all fine with it. The last one's Aidid, and I'm with the ambassador that we had, Dan Simpson, who's a good guy. I liked him. He's a good personal friend. And we go into this meeting and Aidid's in a good mood. He's kind of in a chatty, reasonable mood. He had just come back from something. And, to me—and I knew him—this was going to be easy, to sort of lay this out. But for some reason—and I'm there with a couple of others in there, they decided to become confrontational with him and they get confrontational with him, and they're challenging him and threatening him. And I could see his mood changing into sort of the dark mood, and I'm thinking, oh s——t. So, after the meeting is over and I thought the purpose of coming here—and the part of the area that he controlled was very crucial to how we were going to do this withdrawal—I thought, we've blown this. We have now created an adversarial relationship that we didn't have to, and I could see by the way he looked that he was shifting into this mood. So, as we were leaving and going outside, he had a guy with a camera out there, and he said, "We need to take a picture. How about everybody move over here, and we'll take a picture or something." Of course, they were huffing off, all the contingents and all, both sides. It was kind of a hard meeting. And he reached and he grabbed my arm. He said, "Zinni, stay behind." So I stayed back, kind of like on this little porch that he had on this building as they were all moving on and he looked over at me, and he leaned over, and he said, "You look concerned about something." I said, "Well, that meeting didn't go too well." I said, "Look, we're not here to go to war, [as a] threat. I'm here to tell you that we're going to cover the withdrawal, but we

won't accept any—if they're shooting, firing or a challenge to us, we're going to react. This isn't the United Nations." He said, "I know." He said, "There won't be any trouble, I promise you. It's okay." He said, "But I've got to tell you, in this one area where you are, there is a rogue militia that nobody controls." And that's the one that we had the big shootout with the last night on the beach, but he gave me a heads-up about it. So he was able to shift back in the mode, and I think our relationship allowed that to be done. The other factor, of course, was his son was in our unit.

Allison: Yes, I was going to ask about that. That's interesting.

Zinni: When we first went over in the UNITAF phase, his son, Corporal [Hussein] Farrah then, later to become Sergeant Farrah, was in a Reserve artillery unit out in California. When we went out for Somali translators, his name pops up; he comes out. His name was—see, Aidid's real name is Mohammed Farrah Hussein, and this was Corporal Farrah, and he had two families. One was in Canada, one was in the United States, in California. There was no indication of who this guy was. On the plane on the way over, he sits next to a reporter from the *Chicago Tribune* who happens to be a friend of mine. We were company commanders together in the Marine Corps. A guy named David Evans, and he discovers this. So when we get to Mogadishu, he's got a nice little juicy story. He comes to me and says, "You've got to realize you've got Aidid's son here." So we couldn't use him as an interpreter. He kind of hung out at the headquarters a little bit, and then later went back and took over his father's enterprises after his father was killed in a gunfight in Mogadishu.

Allison: He was killed, I believe in 1996. What were the circumstances?

Zinni: Well, I guess there was a fight between his militias and some others and he decided to go to the scene of the fight and a round hit him in the side, and he went through sort of a long period where he was wounded very seriously and succumbed.

Allison: Interesting. I wonder how many sons he had.

Zinni: Well, I have no idea. I would get letters from his son, even when I was at CentCom later on, and even from [Osmanado] and a couple of the others. I would still get letters.

Allison: Do you?

Zinni: Yes.

Allison: Now, Aidid, would he be a Sunni Muslim?

Zinni: Yes.

Allison: Were they predominantly Sunni?

Zinni: Yes, in that part of the world, predominantly Sunni.

Allison: I was really surprised at how quickly progress was made in the early stages of UNITAF. I mean, you'd gone out there and you'd stabilized the various phases.

Zinni: Well, I think there's a couple of reasons for that. The militias didn't know what was landing. Here comes the U.S., commanding U.S. Marines and all this stuff. They were set back a little bit, so they weren't looking for a fight. The people's expectations were up. Now there was going to be hope on the ground and food can get out and everything. So I think you had a lot of expectations, and so it was easy to get a positive momentum going. I think some of those expectations were a little bit exaggerated, because they didn't understand that our mission was very limited. They thought we were going to come there to reconstruct the whole nation. So there were maybe unreal expectations. That later on, as time went on, that kind of set in. I was

there one week and somebody came up and said there's a contingent of Somalis, Somali intellectuals that are at the gate. They want to come in and talk to you. So I said yes. We had the meeting and they came in. They were former college professors. We were right next to the old university that was not used anymore. Actually, the 1st FSSG, under General [Marvin T.] Hopgood, was in there. So they came in and they were giving me—they were going through all this stuff and said who they are and whatever. And then they said, "You've been here one week. When are you going to start the jobs program for everybody?"

Allison: When's the "Wal-Mart" coming?

Zinni: Exactly.

Allison: This is more about what I want to talk to you about the end, more of a summary, the significance of Somalia, these type [of] situations. You get into a bind, as they say, "mission creep." Is there a middle way in something like this, or do you have to go in with both feet or no feet at all?

Zinni: I think the dilemma comes—to use Secretary Powell's sort of metaphor, the pottery barn, you break it, you own it. To sort of paraphrase that "you touch it, you own it." You go in with a very limited purpose—I'm only going to go in to help this situation and its immediate humanitarian needs: food, water, shelter. You have a devastated society with all its institutions crushed. You can't just go in a little bit. You can't become a little bit pregnant. Once you enter into this, even though your intent is very limited and to fix one element of the problem, you now are the only institution present, positive institution present. You inherit the whole problem. Even though you went in there under Restore Hope to just lay down a security blanket to allow other things to

happen, Provide Hope became the institution that the expectation was going to restructure our nation, provide for our security, reestablish our political system, ensure the rule of law and provide for our needs. Well, we had no intent to do all that, but nobody else was there to do all that. So you touched it, you own it. We touched it and we owned it. You can't get rid of it. To use sort of an example of how this went, a small example, but it sort of typified the problem. When we first went in, the French Legionnaires set up a position and they put a roadblock on the street, and a bus full of Somalis came barreling through the roadblock, obviously didn't know it was there, didn't stop for whatever reason. The Legionnaires opened up on the bus, and it killed or wounded a whole potful of Somalis, and this is like a few days after we got there. Now we had the coalition had wounded, and some very severely wounded, these Somalis. There was no place there in Mogadishu. The two hospitals in Mogadishu were ridiculous. I went out to these things. There were needles hanging from the trees. I had to be careful I didn't fall. The sanitation conditions—and we were responsible for this. So we medevaced these wounded to the LHD of the MEU, Greg Newbold's MEU. When they went out there, they were in such critical condition they couldn't be moved. When it came time for the MEU to turn over, the next MEU had come out and Newbold's MEU and the ARG and the big one was supposed to leave. They couldn't leave, because we couldn't move those people off that ship. If you'd have moved them, you'd have killed them. So that LHD was stuck there until they could be stabilized and moved. In other words, we had stopped the whole rotation of the United States Navy. We couldn't do anything, because when we took in those casualties, we

now became responsible for them. And that sort of exemplified the whole nature of what happens when you get into these kinds of missions.

Allison: In an interview I read online that Oakley gave to PBS online, he mentioned there was a little bit of hostility, suspicion and whatnot toward President Clinton, as opposed to President Bush. Did you pick up any of that?

Zinni: Well, President Clinton when he came in obviously didn't make the decision to go into Somalia, but he embraced Somalia. He embraced Somalia, because this sounded like—he believed in engagement, being more present in the world, doing more kinds of humanitarian things like this. So he embraced it as a wonderful mission. Now, his first real exposure to this in any way and understanding it is when we were leaving, when the UN was taking it. We were coming out in May. We get a call that the president wants to see us at the White House. So our plane lands at Andrews Air Force Base. Bob Johnston, myself, and our troops get rushed over to the White House. A lot of it was a photo op with the troops, but we sit down with the president and the joint chiefs are sitting there, joint chairman and Secretary Powell and the vice president and the president are there. And President Clinton's looking at this and he loves this mission. He loves us. We were supposed to finish the meeting and go. He wouldn't stop. He came out onto the lawn. He was walking around with the troops. They were taking pictures of him. He wanted to talk to every troop. He just thought this mission was so good and we had done so well, everything that had been done. And then when we sat in the Oval Office with him, he asked us—he said, "How many of these can we do at one time?" And I saw Powell kind of going, whoa. What's the limitations on doing a lot of these? I mean, he was now seeing himself as a humanitarian and

reaching out. What are the shortfalls? Why can't we do more of this, and what does it take? What were the issues and the problems? I mean, to him, this was marvelous. This was wonderful. We went out there and did this humanitarian work. We're coming back. It was a big success at that point. I don't think he really understood how fragile it was. So, yes, and then of course he gets caught, Black Hawk down. I don't think he was really focused on what was going on, that it's disintegrating; the mission is shifting. [Les] Aspin isn't paying much attention to it. [Lieutenant General Thomas M.] Montgomery's asking for tanks. What are you going to do with tanks in Mogadishu, just kill more people? I mean, it really went to hell and I think he wasn't focused on this thing; it had drifted away. And he gets caught with it; he gets blamed with it. To this day, he says it's the greatest tragedy of his administration is he didn't react to Rwanda and Burundi, and of course Somalia had poisoned the well.

Allison: What was the reason it turned bad after UNITAF?

Zinni: We pulled out. Like I said, Bob Johnston said, "Thirty days, this is going to go to hell," because he was listening to the UN. The UN came in, and in the words of Admiral Jonathan Howe, he said, "Well, our intent was to isolate, marginalize and minimalize Aidid's influence and power. Oh, we didn't want to go to war with him." That is the definition of war when you're dealing with a warlord. They decided Aidid was an enemy. The tensions grew between the United Nations and Aidid's faction in particular. In my view, they were sort of picking sides and picking and choosing the warlords that should play and shouldn't play. We didn't do that. They allowed the tensions and the hostilities really to grow. The kinds of interaction and intercommunication system of committees that Bob Oakley set in were kind of

allowed to just atrophy and disappear or not be very effective. They got caught in an incident where everything was so charged in this environment. They walk in on a Friday and tell Aidid's lieutenants that they're going to come the next morning for inspection, and of course it's Friday. It's prayers, no one's around. Don't come. Tensions are high. They've been making overt overtures about closing the radio station. In our time, we said we don't take down radio stations. That's freedom of the press unless it's being used in command and control. We'll challenge you on our radio station. They were really hot to do that. The U.S. representative that replaced Oakley, [Robert] Gosende, he was hot to take down, take out the radio station. So when the Pakistanis went to do this inspection and no one was prepared for it, they met some hostility. There was some confrontation. There was a shootout and Somalis were killed. The radio station was entered and breached. The word went out on the street that the Pakistanis have attacked this thing, taken down the radio station. On the way back, they were met with all these people in the streets that have gotten their AK47s. There was a big shootout, the ambush there, so-called ambush, although we claim it was deliberate, but it couldn't possibly have been. They didn't even know they were going to be there. And then they go into the streets and kill the Pakistani soldiers at the feeding stations, providing security. Then it erupts into a war, and then the war gets into JSOC [joint special operations command] hunting down Aidid and all this stuff, and it deteriorates, which we were very careful not to ever let it go to that level. When we had to take action, we took it, took out one of Aidid's militias. We attacked. We went into the streets on the disarmament on the arms caches and everything, confronted a number of them. But we worked with them to ensure that—we didn't

want a war, and we didn't need one. You could have prevented it. I think the United Nations was hell-bent for this confrontation, or at least people within it. They got it, and then you had the Black Hawk down day, and then all of a sudden the president gets caught with what the hell are we doing there? And I'm here at MCCDC as the deputy, sitting at my desk, and I had gone down to the Air Force two-star course, and down there Newt Gingrich spoke, and he was speaking about Somalia. And one of the officers in the class said, "Well, Tony Zinni's sitting right next to you. He's just back from Somalia, or been there." So he got me aside and was asking me questions about Somalia, and I was talking to him about it. So when the Black Hawk down day happens, I get a call the next day from Newt Gingrich, calls me here at MCCDC, and he says, "General," he says, "This is a non-conversation between us. If you're not comfortable with it, me calling you directly, we can stop. But he said the president asked the political leaders to come over to the White House. I'm going over, and he wants us to talk about the decision on Somalia." And he says, "I need to ask you this. Do we go in full bore with tanks and reinforce, or do we pull out totally?" I said, "Well, you know, Mr. Speaker, if that's your only choice, pull out. Why go in and just kill more people for the sake of killing more people." But I said, "That's not your only option." He said, "What do you mean, it's not?" I said, "Because there's another option." I said, "You could upright this situation. You could get a ceasefire, and you could get it back to the way it was. I believe you can. You have some issues to deal with, like responsibility and accountability for things, and that has to be sorted out, because our people were killed, but I think getting"—well, he said, "Who in the world could do that?" And I said, "Well, there's only one man, Bob Oakley." So that night,

I'm sitting at home. I'm watching the playoffs. The Phillies are in the playoffs, and I get a call from General Mundy. I'm in quarters at Quantico. And he said, "What do you know about Oakley going to Somalia, and what do you know about anybody talking to members of Congress and all that." So I said, "Uh-oh." I said, "Well, I've got to tell you. Gingrich called me." He said, "Well, guess what, you're going to Somalia, too. Oakley says if he's going, you're going. So I've been asked to second you to Oakley." Oh, I said, "Okay." And he says, "So you're going." I said, "Fine." And this is like almost midnight. "When is that, sir?" He says, "Six a.m. in the morning, you're at Andrews Air Force Base, and you're on your way to Somalia." So I had to grab my crap and throw it together. And then we went out there and—we were not well received by Admiral Howe and the UN. They had not declared a ceasefire; Aidid had. We communicated with Aidid through the Ethiopians. We went in there. We met with Aidid's people. We were able to convince him to release Warrant Officer Durant and the prisoner, now going to a series of negotiations to begin to upright the process and get back to where we were. So I went over a couple of times with Oakley. We met with him. We started the process. Oakley stayed in and was trying to get it back to where it was, but then the president made the decision to pull out. So we were leaving in six months and kind of Oakley's efforts then fell by the wayside, but at least there wasn't the violence there was before.

Allison: Were you trying to keep that sort of under wraps, the fact that you were going to pull out, the UN was going to come out?

Zinni: No, the president made the decision, the U.S. would pull out of these operations.

Allison: The U.S., not the UN.

Zinni: Now, the UN stayed on for another couple of years.

Allison: Ninety-five.

Zinni: Yes, then '95 I got the call that the UN had asked for us to cover the withdrawal because there were rumors of SA-7s in there and they were worried about trying to do it by air or administratively through a port. It had to be an amphibious withdrawal over the beach. We get tasked, I MEF, to do it. The good news, we had a lot of planning time. I mean I had months. So we really planned it thoroughly. I went to Islamabad. We rehearsed it with the Pakistani leadership and we rehearsed the whole mission in Kenya. When we went up, we did a rock-throwing rehearsal with the forces. What was amazing about that is there were nine tactical evolutions, the most difficult ones you could do, relief in place, passage of lines all with coalition forces, all done at night and all done by amphibious doctrine. We created the CATF [commander amphibious task force] from the CLF [commander, landing force], with the MEU commander and the PhibRon [amphibious squadron] commander. My deputy was the Phib group commander from 3d Fleet, Lee Gunn, so it was this naval operation, done right by the book on a classic amphibious withdrawal under fire. We suffered no casualties, got everybody out, took them out under fire, right up to the last second, off the beach.

Allison: It was almost a perfect operation.

Zinni: That's what being then-Secretary [William] Perry called it, that perfect operation, and I think there were others of other services that didn't like that high praise of what we did.

Allison: Oh, really?

Zinni: I came to Quantico before we went out on the operation, and I offered to the Marine Corps University that I'll brief the students on the plan and come back after the operation to then go through the plan, show them what worked and didn't work and what happened. I also asked MCWAR [Marine Corps War College] or SAW [School of Advanced Warfighting], rather, if they would give me members of the class. I would take them out and put them in the planning cell. I wanted to use them as sort of a devil's advocate, challenge the plan, scrub it down, look at the alternative, and even a sort of an outside view, a red team view, and they did, and from different services. So we did some unusual things in that, nonlethal capability, but the rehearsal and the planning and the time we had to do that really is what made the operation.

Allison: Who were some of the key planners on that? Do you recall?

Zinni: Well, my chief of staff was Colonel John Moffett, Bucky Peterson, Colonel Bucky Peterson was the 3. We had some great planners from CentCom to work with us on that, that CentCom sent down with us and obviously the coalition forces, too. The Italians provided the *San Marco*, the *Garibaldi*, the ship, the San Marco battalion, the Italian Marines that really contributed a lot. The Pakistanis were great, fantastic, in the planning process and right from their chief of their staff down to the brigade commander on the beach. So the UN commander general, Aboo, who was Malaysian, his coordination, chopping the forces to us, his work with us and his staff. So it was really—all the elements came together. I think time and planning and the right people, again, made the difference.

Allison: A very unusual operation, an amphibious landing in reverse.

Zinni: Well, it's an amphibious withdrawal, one of the four amphibious operations. What defines an amphibious operation is that you have amphibious assault, amphibious demonstration and amphibious withdrawal or amphibious—what is the fourth one? I can't believe I'm forgetting, but this was a classic, coming off a hostile beach, an amphibious withdrawal, and the only way to do it in order to be able to protect yourself right into the high watermark. That's literally what we had to do. When I came back, they asked me, what was the key to success? I said the amphibious tractor, the LVT.

Allison: Just like it was at Tarawa.

Zinni: Yes.

Allison: Amazing. That sort of revalidates the Marine Corps amphibious . . .

Zinni: Exactly, and the doctrine. We used it right by the doctrine.

Allison: What implications does Somalia have for education and training of officers?

Zinni: Well, I think it's important, because I see us more and more involvement in nation-building, assisting failed or incapable states, understanding that you can't go in, in a limited way. You've got to address the full spectrum of problems because you can't just fix part of a problem, the value of culture, understanding how to build coalition forces and operate them together, who to relate and associate with, humanitarian workers and others, nonmilitary, bring those functions in, the political side with the likes of Ambassador Oakley and others, the political organizations like the United Nations. I think it's rich in all those lessons. I think the application of force, nonlethal, there was a lot learned and experimented with there, how the phases of the operation goes. I think some of the negative things came out, mission creep, how to avoid that,

be clear on the mission up front, as it changes and evolves, stay tuned to it. I think it's rich in lessons to be drawn out of it.

Allison: Very significant implications for the future. Is it time for you to go, sir?

Zinni: Yes. I've got to hit the road. I've got an event I've got to go to.

Allison: Okay, sir.

End of Session VIII

UNITED STATES MARINE CORPS HISTORY DIVISION
Oral History Interview

Interviewee: General Anthony C. Zinni
Date: 10 March 2008
Length: 02:23:07
Interviewer: Dr. Fred H. Allison

SESSION IX

Allison: This is the ninth session of the interview with General Anthony Zinni and today's date is the 10th of March 2008. And again, we're in the general's conference room in Breckinridge Hall. Good morning, sir.

Zinni: Good morning.

Allison: A bright Monday morning here. It's a beautiful day; the sunrise coming up over the Potomac there.

Zinni: Yes.

Allison: And of course it's daylight savings time, so it's pretty early. We're going to be talking about CentCom [Central Command] today and your tour of duty there, both as the deputy CINC [commander in chief] and also as the CINC at that time.

Zinni: Right.

Allison: Could we start off by you giving me some background on your selection to be deputy CINC at CentCom, and this would have been in 1996 I believe.

Zinni: Right. Well I was told by General [Charles C.] Krulak, who was then the Commandant of the Marine Corps, that he was going to nominate me to be the deputy commander in chief, U.S. Central Command. General Butch Neal—and later Assistant Commandant—was there as the DCINC and his tour was up. He was nominated for the Assistant Commandant, and so I was going to move from I MEF [Marine

Expeditionary Force] to the deputy's job, and General Krulak said it was his intention that I would do that for the year remaining, and then he wanted to nominate me a year later when the opening came for the CINC's job.

Allison: Oh, he told you that ahead of time?

Zinni: Yes, he said that was his intention. It was a little unusual because no DCINCs . . . they tended to be where you went to retire. So he said, "No." He said he wanted to be sure, I mean obviously in those days it was going Army/Marine/Army/Marine. And so it would have been a Marine's turn. Of course, later on under Secretary [William] Cohen, he did away with service-specific commands.

Allison: And just picked the best man for the job.

Zinni: Yes, which made sense, but at that time it was assumed the next one would be a Marine, and I think General Krulak wanted to be sure that if he intended to nominate me, I'd have CentCom credentials I guess, although I MEF—obviously we were working with CentCom and we were the operational commander under MarCent [Marines Central Command] and so I was very familiar with the war plans. I spent a lot of time down there—I'd done Somalia under CentCom—so we were very familiar. But I think in the long run it gave the Marine Corps then two candidates: General Neal, who obviously had three tours in CentCom and was the ACMC; and then my time as I MEF and being part of MarCent focused on CentCom, then the DCINC. I think General Krulak was shrewdly positioning as many people as he could for their next job.

Allison: Okay, sir. Once you find out that you're going to be going out there, what did you do? I mean what were your thoughts at this time, and how did you prepare for that?

Zinni: Well, I knew CentCom reasonably well. As I said, of being the commander of I MEF, when we did CentCom exercises like Internal Look and the other major exercises, we participated as the senior Marine operational headquarters under MarCent so I was fairly familiar with the region. I had been involved in Desert Storm from EuCom [European Command] experience in the war. So I knew the Iraq business and Desert Storm pretty well and how all that went, and of course Somalia and the exercises. So I really felt though that I wanted to be sure I understood the area of responsibility very well. I immediately got myself about 50 books and some Arab language tapes, and so I spent time learning languages. I tried to learn, but it turned out of course that you really didn't need it. They virtually all speak English. But I wanted to be able to at least have some of the phrases down and be able to speak a little bit in social context. And I read a lot of books that people recommended. So before I left I MEF, I really consumed a large amount of reading and asked for recommendations from others at CentCom and elsewhere, you know, as much as possible to try to come up to speed, particularly on the recent history but also the culture and other aspects of the area of responsibility.

Allison: You mentioned I MEF and I forgot that we were going to talk about I MEF.

Zinni: Yes.

Allison: You became CG of I MEF in 1994 I believe, right?

Zinni: Right.

Allison: Right after Somalia, after you had served as the Joint Task Force commander, Somalia.

Zinni: Well, actually I was the Joint Task Force commander as the commander of I MEF. We were given the mission. So I was at MCCDC [Marine Corps Combat Development

Command] as the deputy commander, but while here at MCCDC, I had two tours in Somalia. The first as deputy director of operations in back of Ambassador [Robert B.] Oakley. So I went to I MEF from there, and while at I MEF, I commanded United Shield. But we had a lot of other things going on at I MEF at the time. And what struck me about I MEF; a couple of things, is we answered to five CINCs. So we had CentCom, PaCom [Pacific Command], EuCom under one plan, SouthCom, Korea, and so we had so many contingencies and war plans we had to be familiar with, and of course every CINC did it differently. So you had to be aware of the, for example, the joint fires, SOPs, the way they worked air and other things was so uniquely different you really had to have five sets of these sorts of things to understand how to morph your organization into what the CINCs would need, the way they operated, their particular war plans and contingency plans.

The other thing that was interesting at I MEF that had hit me is how many of the domestic requirements we had. We had troops in the counterdrug mission. We had troops that had to be prepared to fight wildfires, and of course being out in California and the West we had two battalions at all times, and they got called out frequently to do that. We did part of the border security out there. And before I got to I MEF, of course, they had responded to the L. A. riots, and so that was fresh in our mind. We still had that contingency. So we spent a lot of time involved in domestic support operations. It became a major part of what we did: the drugs, the border, potential civil disturbance missions, the wildfire business. And so along with the requirements that we had from CentCom—going back to [Joseph P.] Hoar's day—to be the JTF [Joint Task Force commander] in Africa for peacekeeping and humanitarian missions, we

had sort of this collection of nontraditional missions.

We spent a lot of time with exercises like Emerald Express and other things that we had really developed into looking at these kinds of missions—the peacekeeping missions, the humanitarian missions, the domestic security requirements—and that consumed a lot of our time. We were really busy with that in I MEF. The two big commitments of course were CentCom and Korea because we were in the Korean War Plan, a major element, and we were in CentCom as a major element, particularly Korea. I learned a lot in the Ulchi Focus Lens exercises and the other exercises and working with General Gary Luck who was the commander-in-chief of Korea, and the plan had evolved in a major way. The MEF in the Korean war plan would become the CMEF—the combined Marine expeditionary force, and under the plan we had up to five divisions under MEF control. We had two U.S. Marine divisions. You know once an amphibious operation was done the 3d Division chopped to us. So we had the 1st and 3d U.S. Marine Divisions. We had a Korean Marine division. We had a Korean Army division, and we also had the 101st Air Assault division under parts of the plan. So there were times when we had a five-division force: the two air wings: 3d and 1st, and also a significant amount of support, engineering support, Army heavy engineers, and two SeaBee regiments. So the Korean War plan was really demanding in terms of the command and control. So besides those sorts of other nontraditional missions, we had these major war plan requirements. Of course, in the CentCom requirement I MEF was one of the core-level commands so that was significant, and of course based on the experience of Desert Storm, we could see the role had actually grown. So at one end of the scale I MEF had to really be prepared for these major large-scale, large-

formation operations, and at the other end of the scale is a collection of smaller ones, some of which we did on a daily basis, the domestic ones. So it was an interesting time and I MEF really had an operational focus out of necessity because we answered to so many different unified commands. It was a time when we really worked, I thought, in pioneering a lot in these areas as to how the MEF would fight on a much larger scale and how, of course, it would deal with the sort of lower-end contingencies, and that sort of made up, beside the Somalia operation, most of our time out there.

Allison: Can you give an example of some of the pioneering operations—Emerald Express was one, wasn't it?

Zinni: Yes. Emerald Express—when I got there Emerald Express had been done once just the year before. It was directed by CentCom, and it was done just before I had gotten there. And it was a field exercise basically—it was required by CentCom merely to look at the peacekeeping humanitarian missions—and I felt we didn't need a field exercise. I mean there are three categories of things that you do in these kinds of operations. One is the things you do day to day, which are directly transferable, like you know if you run a ROWPU—reverse osmosis water purification unit—you're going to do it in conventional operations and then these operations are the same way. There is a second set of skills that you modify, you know for example urban patrolling in a combat operation or mission. You have to modify it somewhat if you're in sort of a peacekeeping mission where there is sort of quasi-hostility and still a functioning civilian population. And then there's a set of entirely new skills like negotiating or things like that that you'll normally use. So I wanted to focus particularly on the skills that were totally new and somewhat on the ones you modify. But more importantly in

Emerald Express, I wanted to bring in nongovernmental organization leaders and government leaders. We had Madeline Albright out to Emerald Express, and we had a number of senior NGOs and humanitarian workers. We had people from the Office of Foreign Disaster Assistance and people I knew from some of the missions I'd been on. And so Emerald Express really became more of a "How do you develop the doctrine and how do you develop the interagency/interorganization coordination connection?" It was more an operational strategic-level week that we spent every year, and we published a lot out of that. We brought in a lot of reading material. We published the lessons learned and the comments from people and the recommendations, so I wanted to capture a lot of that. So Emerald Express was a major effort in that area.

In the higher-end stuff as we were learning things in the Ulchi Focus Lens and the Internal Looks and were working more with Korea and CentCom—and we were now working with major Army, Air Force, and Navy operations in a much larger scale—we were trying to capture those lessons working with the MSTP-MAGTF Staff Training Program out of Quantico, which I thought was really excellent and really helped us a lot, but I think we were a major vehicle because we were the MEF that was working at the high end. And so for lack of a better term, what was evolving was called "single battle" in being able to fight not only the current battle tactically but looking operationally and strategically ahead, preparing and shaping the battlefield and all the lessons that were coming out working with the unified commands that had the major theaters of war. We were capturing some of these and experimenting on some things. And of course MSTP was doing a great job at looking at the other two MEFs, too—II MEF and III MEF—and lessons they picked up there and sharing it

with all the MEFs. So you know we were deeply involved in that because it was really evolving doctrine and techniques and procedures and everything, and how to do business, and of course in those days the key focus was on the two major theaters of war: Korea and, of course, Iraq and CentCom. So we were the MEF for both those. So you know it was really a unique experience, and I think we did a lot to sort of pioneer and help work and share what we picked up in those lessons, you know what worked and what didn't work, and MSTP was great about sort of processing that. General [Earnest] Cheatham, Lieutenant General Cheatham retired, was heading MSTP, was a fantastic leader in that respect and doing a great deal of work with us to ensure we shared the best practices and the ideas that we learned, and challenging us on things that we wanted to experiment with. So you know at both ends of that—and really strongly being developed—I became a MEFeR. I mean I was a MEFeR I think all along because General [Al] Gray was a MEFeR and I was a General Gray protégé, I guess. And I believe strongly in the MEF and the MEF as a repository, or as he used to say, “A reservoir of combat power that you shape to meet the mission.”

Allison: As opposed to a MEB [Marine expeditionary brigade].

Zinni: Yes, and you use the MEF. I was not a MEBer, I was a MEFeR, and the MEFers and MEBers sort of had different views. And other places in the Marine Corps very senior officers were MEBers. So we had our disputes in that area.

Allison: What's the difference, sir, besides just the size of a MEF as opposed to a MEB?

Zinni: Well I strongly believe, as Gray said, that you shape whatever you need out of the MEF; if you need a special mission task force, if you need to send a MEF (Forward) out you sent the MEF (Forward) out. You didn't have to MEB up, and what is great

about the Marine Corps is our ability to task organize down to the lowest level. And we began to start thinking about breaking it down and having preformed MEBs and it didn't make sense to me. First of all, it's a waste of staff. So we had more staffs than we need.

Secondly it was confusing, and the people that were proponents of this didn't understand they were confusing it. I'll give you a good example. In the war plan for Iraq, when the Marines sent out I MEF (Forward), the Army sent their brigades out. When they looked at the I MEF (Forward) and saw that as a forward headquarters of the MEF, equal to their corps, they would chop their brigades to I MEF (Forward) until their corps got there, their heavy corps or whatever. Well once we said, "MEB," the Army said, "Well wait a minute. We're not going to chop our brigades to a brigade. That doesn't make sense." They're coequal, because you have a brigade. And it caused massive confusion despite the fact that it was supposed to be more clear. You know we have a force; they have a corps. We have a unit, and they have brigades. And so the MEB didn't clear it up. It became more confusing in how we chop forces to each other and I think added to the confusion.

But I always felt the Marine Corps had too many staffs. You know we've got all these MAGTF staffs. We've got all these division and wing and group and regimental staffs, and you know by the time—if you look at the combat battalions and squadrons and you look at how many staffs we have, PPs [power points] outnumber rifles pretty soon. So I could form a staff out of my MEF for any mission, and I guess I was a believer in that because I MEF had such a variety of missions that it had to do out there. I mean besides all that, too, we had the amphibious mission. We were tied very

closely with the 3d Fleet out there and with PHIBGRU 3. We had a strong close relationship, which really helped us in Somalia when we went out there. I saw a closer relationship with our Navy counterparts than the other MEFs. The fleet commander was Admiral Connie Lautenbacher, PHIBGRU commander Lee Gunn, and we were so close out there that changes of command, either on the Navy side or the Marine side, the MEF or the fleet, we constantly went to each other's changes of command. We socialized together. When there were issues or questions about relationships, Navy/Marine Corps, we were always in lockstep. Beside the MEFer/MEBer battle there was this naval relationship. Coming out of the East Coast in II MEF, they felt strongly we needed to get rid of the old amphibious doctrine, that it ought to be a supporting/supported relationship, and we fought that from our end because we believed the amphibious doctrine was right. We used it in Somalia. We did it right by the book. We had no adversarial relationship with the fleets. Supporting/supported was a joint relationship. The Navy/Marine Corps operations were not joint, and they shouldn't be. One of our roles was as the FMF; the Fleet Marine Force that operate with the fleets, and we were throwing that out the window and just having the same relationship as say Army units with the Navy or Air Force units, which I thought was wrong. Admiral Lautenbacher thought it was wrong. We fought it but we were lone voices out there. The MEUs and MEBers and supporting relationship guys were carrying the day and to this day I think those were mistakes, and I thought it was unique the way we operated. And I would argue—and it's arguable—that we had more operational experience in I MEF than the others had. It's not being parochial. I would spend a lot of time at III MEF and II MEF, too. It's just at the moment what

was happening.

Allison: So the MEB was on the rise on the East Coast, is that what you said?

Zinni: Well yes, the MEB was, I was not a fan of the MEB. General [James L.] Jones brought it back later on and was a fan. And to be fair to General Jones, he asked me my opinion—by then I was commander of CentCom—and I gave him my views on the MEB versus MEF and I thought we were becoming overly infatuated with the MEBs and MEUs instead of the MEFs. You can operate the small missions out of the MEFs and we saw every kind of mission, but you had to have that ability for that MEF to fight itself. That had to be the center of focus, the centerpiece. General Gray believed that. I believe that. And I would argue now, you know, we can see the value of the MEFs and the way they operate and how they have to form up strange formations and put them out there, and it gives you a lot of flexibility and it cuts down on your staff overhead.

Allison: You can organize the staff to suit the mission or the task at hand.

Zinni: I could organize the staff to do anything. As a matter of fact if you looked at those small missions, we had; the counterdrug mission, JTF-6, the border mission, wildfires, there wasn't a time in I MEF when I was there that we didn't have, between exercises and real operations, the Somalias and other things, that we didn't have four or five things going on at the same time. So we centralized it, and we could support the MEUs that were out. We could support those small missions and task forces and special purpose, either task forces or MAGTFs. We could support the big operations. And we really looked at the MEF being sort of a central hub, that they could have centralized support, not breaking down in little bits and pieces and fragmenting. An

ops center kind of that you have multiple missions going on all over the world, such as we did, and I thought you could combine and centralize a lot of things like your intelligence support and other things.

Allison: How big of an issue was patrolling the border—it kind of ties into JTF-6—but how big a part was that?

Zinni: Well it was a big issue down there then because of the sensitivity to it all. We had very restrictive rules of engagement, and there were several times that we got into issues where use of force either was necessary or we came close to it. We were supposed to not engage. We were supposed to basically do the reconnaissance kind of work—patrolling work and then let Border Patrol handle it, or in the case of the drug business, the local authorities. But we were constantly fighting ourselves in situations where we either came close to or had a confrontation and the use of the force might have been necessary. Of course after I left the MEF and General [Carlton W.] Fulford took over we had the incident in Texas.

Allison: Right, because a Marine shot some interlopers.

Zinni: Well I think a young farmer. But that was about to be a growing problem. We could see that the missions put us in potential confrontation. We patrolled some of the national forests, and we'd find the drug labs out there. On some of the border issues, we would be astride obviously of some of the paths that the "coyotes" and the illegal immigrant trails, and so that could put you in harm's way and doing some of the counterdrug work, too. Even the wildfire was dangerous and the two battalions we had trained, several times were extensively deployed fighting long-term fires. Some of our people had actually qualified to be fire jumpers and other things. We had been so

much involved. And that sort of classification of the levels of fire and where you can be and fight—we moved up because of the training. Camp Pendleton had an unusual fire department. It was one of the few in the world that was capable of dealing with the six different classes or types of fires, from urban fires . . . so we had an extensive training program we had to put the battalions through to be ready for that when they were on that wildfire sort of watch out there. So that became another issue. I mean we really had to be schooled up on those sorts of things too.

Allison: They're yearly events almost now, aren't they?

Zinni: Yes. So we did one for business out there and the constant deployments for the exercises in Korea and then CentCom where we would work with the CINC's plans, and we deployed units to SouthCom for actual operations.

Allison: JTF-6 operations, you mean?

Zinni: Yes. And you know we took turns with II MEF on supporting SouthCom and obviously had PaCom requirements and commitments, too. We were JTF under PaCom's plan for some missions and obviously were part of PaCom's Fleet Marine Forces. And so the whole time there, the two years, was the operational tempo and how busy we were—had Somalia—was extensive. And so when I left to go to the DCINC job I really felt that I MEF had given me a great personal experience. And we well understood the world that we had to deal with.

Allison: I can see that. What about training? Were the CAXs ongoing?

Zinni: Yes.

Allison: You were supporting those. I mean were those still viable?

Zinni: Yes, the CAXs were in full bloom obviously and of course because of our location out

there—and actually some of I MEF was located in Twentynine Palms—we had 7th Marines plus other support elements out there, tanks and tracks and other things, engineers out there. So you know it offered a great training environment out there, and also amphibious training, too, as I said, with 3d Fleet, which we did off the coast. And of course the amphibious training paid off because when we went as the JTF for Somalia for United Shield it was an amphibious operation. It was an amphibious withdrawal, and we did it right by the book. We had rehearsed it and we knew it well.

Allison: I have another question sort of in context with what you're talking about, maybe more of the MEF and the MEB issue. Looking back over the evolution of Marine doctrine over the span of your career—you talked about this at other times talking about maneuver warfare and changes in the Marine Corps after Vietnam especially—but one of our writers in the History Division was wondering if there were informal or formal groups of officers who would get together and discuss these issues and sort of led the way?

Zinni: Yes. I think when we sort of had the revolution that began in the '70s, and I would call it sort of a revolution in operational thinking or operational art—and of course this was the era when people like Bill Lind and others were really beginning to spout their theories on maneuver warfare—but you also had a military changing and evolving post-Vietnam and I think many officers in the Marine Corps, particularly the younger officers that had no Vietnam experience, really felt strongly about the need for this in-depth thinking about the operational art and about whether we were structured right, whether we were organized right and whether our doctrine was right.

So it began in the '70s. And so you began to find, I guess particularly at the

schools at Quantico—you know then AWS [Amphibious Warfare School] and Command and Staff College—you began to find officers that were talking about these things and meeting with others, meeting with others from outside the Corps like Bill Lind and others, and so there was a lot of this thought going on that there was a need to change philosophy. And you had proponents for this like General [Al] Gray and several other senior officers that encouraged it. You also had a school in the Marine Corps that did not like it, that really felt it endangered our traditional thinking, that it was too difficult to grasp, or it was too vague.

Allison: Or did they consider it too armored up or too Army-like, or something like that?

Zinni: No, I mean part of the . . . and it had nothing to do with maneuver warfare, which really wasn't based on whether it was armor or had anything to do with mobility. It had to do with more of a mind-set. But it got translated into that because when we came out of Vietnam we started to relook at our position in Europe and what the Marine missions were because they're all in the flanks—southern and northern flank, particularly northern flank. And so now we were beginning to think in order to be relevant, because this is at a time when Binkin's and Record's study came out—*Where Does the Marine Corps Go From Here?*. It was a big thing. It was a real challenge to the Marine Corps. People were talking about there was no longer a need for the Marine Corps. Even the secretary of defense, [James] Schlesinger at the time, was prodding the Marine Corps that “You better rethink where you are and where you're going and the need.” So there was a school of thought and there were many proponents, again from outside the Marine Corps, that thought in order for the Marine Corps to be relevant it had to be relevant to sort of the central front, and in order to be

relevant there we had insufficient combat power so they wanted to mech up the Marine Corps. So there were all sorts of discussions about becoming a mechanized force. Some sort of draft doctrine was being written for mechanized combined armed task forces. And we were now participating in major exercises in Europe like Northern Wedding and Bold Guard and these operations where II MEB would go over as this huge mechanized force with an entire tank battalion and track battalion. I may have participated in those, too, and mentioned before this theory about a meched up Marine Corps, and I think rightfully so. General [Louis] Wilson was the Commandant and was really leery of this and wary of where this would take you, and felt very strongly that—as some of the old retired generals felt, General [Victor] Krulak and others—“Don’t get yourself trapped into one formation,” and these guys had resisted the temptation to become light counterinsurgency forces when there was pressure during the Kennedy administration to do that. They said, “No, keep your balance. We’ll task and we’ll organize. We’ll do any mission, but we’re not going to throw all our eggs in one basket. It would be a mistake.” Now they were questioning the same thing wisely. And I go back to my point about the MEF, “We can be what you want to be. We can task organize,” and the critics were saying, “No you can’t, you really can’t fight that way.” So the Bold Guard exercises were tests of that in what we did in Europe and how we looked at securing the northern flanks or maybe open up another front from the north and demonstrating our flexibility, because obviously the amphibious nature of the northern and southern flanks, and also the ability to use our air power to generate much of our combat power because of the MAGTF. So the ’70s and the early ’80s were really rich with all kinds of ideas, theories, pressures on the Marine

Corps, criticisms, and you know it was another period of Marine Corps history where clear thought, retaining your flexibility and adaptability and retaining your balance was important. That's another reason why I became a MEFer, I think, because it allows you to keep your balance.

You know you don't commit to certain formations or into certain ways of doing things. You stay flexible because you don't know what the future's going to bring. And again, I mean I'm a victim of my experiences and my experiences showed me, like I just said in I MEF experience, that you were all over the map. You're doing everything from domestic security missions to five-division combined Marine expeditionary force operations and you've got to have the flexibility to deal with that.

Allison: It seems like to me it's almost paradoxical for the Marine Corps to fight in a unified or a coalition scenario; an AOR [area of responsibility], when the Marine Corps, it's a coalition itself in the sense that it ties all the aspects of warfighting together but then it's supposed to integrate into a bigger coalition. Do you know what I'm saying?

Zinni: Yes. Well I think that the key—where we ran into trouble a lot of times is, and I've had many senior general officers and admirals always tell me that, "We love the Marines and we love your capability. What we don't like is your doctrinal air approach." And I think for a while before we sort of institutionalized the flexibility, for a while we would be too pedantic. We would have all these restrictions. I mean we would recite chapter and verse how you had to employ the Marine Corps, what you couldn't do. I was at EuCom as a young brigadier and I'd listen to all these colonels running around dictating the way the Marine Corps, "You can't split the ARG [amphibious ready group]. You must be employed as a MAGTF." Yada, yada, yada.

And here were the commanders saying, “In many circumstances that may be true or in most cases, but I have cases when I need your capability and you’re so great I want to use you in a different way.” And I was arguing, “Hey, we can do anything you want. The Marine Corps is flexible. We can do anything you want. We’re not going to stand” . . . you know we have a preferred way to operate and I came to believe and I think I have probably more joint experience than 99 percent, if not all, of the Marine Corps senior officers—I spent my whole general officer time in the joint world, you know in the service doctrine. I don’t care whose it is, it’s fine, and you try to operate under it, but it’s only applicable about 80 percent of the time, and unified commanders have the authority to break service doctrine. And when service doctrines conflict with each other, somebody’s rice bowl is going to get broken and so you’ve got to step up to it. And so I think the Marine Corps made a lot of money in the end when it demonstrated its flexibility, like “We do windows. We can do anything. We can do it any way you want. We’re not going to be hung up.” And I think the Marine Corps got away from the paranoia, too. I think maybe we crossed the line somewhere in the ’80s where you didn’t have to worry about your existence anymore and who was going to take something from you. I think we finally realized you just keep proving yourself on the battlefield and eventually you’re fully paid up.

When some of the older retired generals, who I always respected, visited my headquarters at I MEF or came down to CentCom, they would marvel at the fact that here was a Marine Corps now, a full paid-up service, a member of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, our share if not more of the unified command billets and staffs, and you know respected in many ways, even more so maybe than other services at times, and you

earn that by your ability to get out and do it. I mean you earn it on the battlefield. You don't earn it by trying to out-write the other guy with more clever doctrine.

Allison: Or political maneuvering or whatever.

Zinni: Yes, and so that was my feeling. And not everybody shared that but that was my view. My view was, "Prove yourself out there at the game day and you'll play." That was General Gray who used to say, "There are no crowded battlefields. Just show them you can do it, and you'll get your plan done."

Allison: Yes, sir. Back to CentCom. You talked about preparing for this assignment. You'd just come from EuCom. Was it hard to shift your thinking to reorient yourself to the Middle East and Asia as compared to EuCom?

Zinni: No, you know every culture's unique and every region's unique but the principles are the same. I mean what I learned—and I guess really beginning as a lieutenant in Vietnam with the Vietnamese Marines—that there's a cultural side to everything you do. We never pay much attention to that [and] you really needed to understand. So you know I wanted to understand this culture. I had a little bit, very little experience in it, but I really wanted to throw myself into understanding that as much as possible. Later on as the CINC, we held school for our people at several levels on courses on culture and on history and others, and so I thought it was critically important. I really valued the foreign area officers and what they brought and tried to keep them in multiple tours in CentCom without killing their careers because the services didn't appreciate them as much, and maybe it's a little better now but not much. But the value of culture always struck me. Going back to my lieutenant times and of course Somalia times and times with the Kurds and planning for the Balkans and everything else, that you need

to understand what culture does and brings to the environment and the situation you face.

Allison: Who was particularly influential in giving you good advice as you moved into that job?

Zinni: Well going into command at this level, at the unified command level, I learned a helluva lot from General Gary Luck out in Korea as the Korea commander and he taught me a lot operationally. I really gained a lot by participating in UFLs—Ulchi Focus Lens—and talking to him, and I mean I thought he was a forward thinker in terms of large scale, what I would call theater operations. And so that was really beneficial.

Of course I'd known General Hoar; I think General Hoar really saw the importance of engagement and shaping the area from relationships and strategic relationships and cultural understanding, and I'd really taken that away from working with him and knowing him. Of course, I knew him all the way back to Vietnam days.

Then I had the good fortune as the DCINC to work under General [J.H. Binford] Peay, and I think General Peay; my predecessor there as CentCom commander, invested a lot in the military side—the order of battle side—and what we needed in theater and how we should prepare ourselves in the military-to-military relationship. So if you put those three together: General Hoar in terms of the strategic relationships, understanding the culture, understanding how to build those relationships and work with the diplomats and others of the regions; the operational design and art that I picked up from General Luck, and then General Peay on how to do it in the theater, how to lay it down, how to prepare yourself and have the right balance of forward presence forces. And he was an excellent planner. So I had heard it from him; a good

set of plans that certainly allowed me to build on and work with because they were very solid and well thought out. So I had sort of those three as a major influence.

Of course, my EuCom time working for Generals [Jack] Galvin and [Jim] McCarthy and Admiral [Leighton] Smith and a number of others out there, I still had from my EuCom time that sort of theater unified command perspective, too. So those were the ones that really helped me pull all together the joint approach, if you will, especially the most senior-level joint approach and then understanding the operational art and the operational level, and then tie it into the strategic level.

Allison: You show up at CentCom in August 1996 as the deputy.

Zinni: Right.

Allison: What was the situation there and what were your initial impressions?

Zinni: Well they had just experienced Khobar Towers—the bombing—and it really rocked the command and the headquarters, and they had lost something like 19 airmen and this was in the eastern provinces of Saudi Arabia. And I got there as the investigation was ongoing and about ready to wrap up—the Downing investigation on all this—and there was a lot of controversy. General Peay was really trying to protect General [Terry] Schwalier who was the commander on Khobar Towers, and it was clear that the investigation was going to dump a lot of responsibility on him. I think General Peay felt that that was unfair to a certain degree. He felt that everybody shared some responsibility, not only CentCom but the components and others from the security. And some of this, too, we were under host nation support. We were concentrating on flying the no-fly zones. And I think the mood was that there was too much looking for blame rather than understanding what happened and trying to work with it. But the

Downing Report came out, and General Peay asked me—I just came onto the job—and I was told that as the Downing Report concluded—and it concluded shortly after I got there—I was responsible for implementing the findings of the Downing Report, and the Downing Report had a really long list of things that it recommended, security upgrades and everything else. And so I spent a lot of my time in that year implementing them, and we agreed and implemented all but one. One called for the movement of our headquarters into the region.

Allison: Into the region from Tampa?

Zinni: From Tampa. And it wasn't that we were necessarily opposed to that. It just was so impractical. And when I became CINC it came up again and Secretary [William] Cohen wanted to take a hard look into the study. But if you looked at, where would you put it politically, every place comes with political baggage and uncertainty. If you move it can you afford the MilCon [military construction]? What are you going to do about accompanied tours and family support systems and schools? Security would be a major effort. The cost would be prohibitive. The only place in the entire region that was not under a terrorist security threat at some level was the Seychelles Islands in the middle of the Indian Ocean, you know. So it was just impractical. And we had looked at this and looked at it again and again, and it came up in my time and it just didn't make sense. So I mean we could operate from Tampa. I mean if we had a reasonably secure easy place to sustain and the funds and the resources to put it somewhere overseas it would be fine with me but we didn't have the structure because we use a lot of McDill's structure obviously—their security and everything else, administration. The Air Force was our executive at—and so moving it just became impractical. And I

spent about 70 percent of my time in the AOR anyway.

I had grade “A” air support and everything else to operate and move in and out, and in seven hours I could be in the theater. And so what I decided to do, which was based on—General Peay began this—but General Peay began setting up a forward headquarters in Riyadh, and I thought we should be flexible enough to have several locations. So I wanted a potential for a CentCom Forward in about three or four locations, and we did. We had prepared one for Kuwait and one for Bahrain and then eventually the one I began for Qatar just before I left, and that’s the one General [Tommy] Franks used later on. And we had one in Saudi Arabia in Riyadh. I also wanted to put in a forward headquarters for each of the components but I had to disguise them a little bit because it would look too much like you’re going to war. So we created these JTFs. And so you had the JTF Southwest Asia, which was really the air operations for Southern Watch, but I said, “That’s my CentAF [Central Command, Air Force], my Air Force component forward and my JFACC [joint force air component commander] forward.” We had the Navy already in-theater, you know 5th Fleet. So NavCent [Navy, Central Command] already was positioned there. Since we kept forces up in Kuwait, I built up the forces up there in Kuwait and designated that JTF Kuwait as a joint task force and the Army and Marines manned it but really that was my JFLCC [joint forces land component commander]. Everybody felt we needed one ever since the Gulf War, but the Army guys said if we do it, the Marines will be all over us. So I said, “There will be a JFLCC.”

Allison: Separate from the CentCom commander running the war.

Zinni: Yes, separate from the CentCom commander. So I created one under then General

Frank's 3d Army; and I MEF and MarCent and 3d Army and ArCent [Army Central Command] worked really well together to build that. I mean General Fulford, General [Bruce B.] Knutson—all of them when they were the MEF commanders—General [Frank] Libutti, General Franks, they really worked hard to make that work and of course then in the Iraq War they used it under General [David D.] McKiernan.

And then I needed a SOC Forward so we created a Special Operations Command Element in Qatar and so really that was my SOC forward. So in the absence of having a headquarters forward, I put in sort of the basis, if you will, for us to deploy into theater on top of these and I called them these little JTFs that show you the doctrine air and stuff, too. Joint Forces Command came out there and their CINC at the time—they were transitioning from LantCom [Atlantic Command] to Joint Forces Command—they came out and were highly critical of these little JTFs all around, and I tried to explain to them, “You don't understand what this is. This isn't a bunch of little JTFs. These JTFs are the forward headquarters.” I said, “If we need to go out there and do something” because we were doing a dual-containment of Iran and Iraq. So the potential to go out there and deploy in a major war plan for Iran or Iraq, or some of the smaller war plans we had, I had the element so we could fall right in. And there were several times we got ginned up. We did the strikes on Iraq. When the inspectors came out we were unsure what would happen and we beefed up the forces in Kuwait, moved more air and naval forces in there, and I would jump in there and go to one of my forward headquarters and operate out of there for a while and then my components could easily expand these JTFs, which were really joint component headquarters. Trying to explain that to the folks in Suffolk was a frustration, because

they always wanted to blow the whistle, “It was doctrinally incorrect,” and all that, until I didn’t care.

Allison: All you did was put flagpoles up there.

Zinni: Well again it goes to the point that we had too many people that spent too much time studying doctrine instead of studying warfare and aren’t as adaptable as they should be, in my mind.

So I mean the major thrust is we implemented the findings from the Downing Report. Obviously force protection became the big focus then. Everything had to do with force protection. We created a force protection element at the CentCom headquarters. We spent a lot of time reinforcing our security in the region and elsewhere, even back at CentCom Headquarters in Tampa. Obviously this was going to become a major issue and really handicapped us in a lot of ways. We had to do day-to-day business.

We had a major security assistance program throughout the region in each of the countries. I mean we had two-star generals in places like Egypt and Kuwait and Saudi Arabia where the programs were extensive and those things had to go on day to day. You know we were holding together a new Gulf coalition, too, which was based on a series of bilateral relationships where we were the glue, so that took a lot of care.

So as the DCINC, I was caught up in the day-to-day operations. The DCINC was double-hatted as the chief of staff, too really. So I was running the headquarters and also doing that particular task. General Peay was fantastic in that he said, “We’re a team.” He said, “Any decision you make is like speaking for me. You can make any decision. I want you involved in everything.” He allowed me to go to the AOR on

trips, take his plane and go over there on my own and build some relationships, get to see it firsthand and talk to everybody. So the one year was a great investment. I just really felt fully engaged, fully involved, and I worked for a great guy in General Peay that really supported what we did. So the DCINC experience really, I think, could not have been a better preparation.

Allison: What kind of aircraft did they provide for you to fly in?

Zinni: Well in those days we had two Air Force converted tankers. These were the civilian version of the original C-135s, the military version of the 707s, and we had two of them. We had our own crews. We had the two planes. And they were old. One of them was the oldest plane the Air Force had. It was like the third oldest but they were very reliable. One of them eventually, when I became CINC, they sent to the bone yard. But it was reliable. It was a big plane. It was mine. I had my own crew. And then the Air Force put a tanker squadron while I was there into McDill. So that really helped. Now my guys were out there with sort of a different type of plane, but it was the original model of the 135 and so were the tankers down there. And we had a really excellent relationship with the base and the Air Force. The Air Force gave us tremendous support in CentCom as the executive, and the squadron and the base down there couldn't do enough for us. And the local community, the community was really promilitary. They really didn't need McDill. It wasn't economically important but just the patriotism out there, very loyal. I mean the sports teams and everybody else just embraced the military and our people, and the community embraced us. So it was a fantastic environment to work in. It was a great place to have CentCom headquarters, and Special Operations Command [SOCom] was there, too.

That was convenient, too, having that kind of relationship with SOCom, General [Peter J.] Schoomaker and before him, General [William L.] Shelton, who became chairman. So I got to know them—they were neighbors—and also the commands, and since we drew on them a lot that was another benefit of being at McDill. So the operational support, having the convenience of your own airplanes to go and come whenever you want to, and the capacity in those airplanes. Communications weren't the greatest because it was an old airplane but they were adequate from the plane, and a lot of times when we deployed you had to have the command and control in the air from when we took off and landed. I had quality people on the staff. The services supported me very well, tons of people.

Allison: Did you live on base there at McDill?

Zinni: Yes, we were on base there and the houses were a stone's throw from the headquarters. It was very convenient.

Allison: Okay, you've got this time as the deputy, and as you know you're going to become the CINC . . .

Zinni: Well, I didn't know that.

Allison: Oh, I thought you said General Krulak had . . .

Zinni: No, General Krulak intended to nominate me.

Allison: Oh, nominate. It wasn't a guarantee though.

Zinni: No, there are no guarantees in anything. He just expressed his intent to nominate me.

Allison: You had congressional hearings and everything, right?

Zinni: Well when it was getting close to the time for General Peay to leave General Krulak would be calling me every day and I just sensed that something was up. I didn't know

what it was and I asked him, I said, “What’s wrong?” He said, “Well,” he said, “[John] Shalikashvili won’t support your nomination,” you know and this kind of shouldn’t surprise me because I was his chief of staff and . . .”

Allison: You worked with him.

Zinni: Yes, and he said, “Shali won’t support your nomination because he says you can’t be controlled” [*chuckle*]. And I laughed and he laughed, too, and old Krulak said, “I don’t know what that means, ‘controlled.’ Why would you want to control?” And alien to us Marines that you control. And the first thing I thought of is I remember a general officer symposium we had at, I guess I was at Quantico at the time—a two star—and we invited three reporters to sit in on the symposium deliberations. One of them was George Wills. And we went into the symposium—it was at headquarters—and when we got in behind closed doors—and they were there with us—the generals . . . brigadiers to four stars are arguing back and forth and all this stuff, then we’d break and go outside, and the reporters were like dumbfounded. And we asked them—they seemed to be in shock, and they said, “We’ve never seen any . . .” and they had gone around to other sessions. They said, “You Marines, you’ll go in there as generals, and whether you’re a one star or a four star, you’ll argue with each other. You’ll tell it like it is. You’ll invite the junior guys to speak. As soon as you walk outside, it’s like iron discipline—“Yes, sir” or “No, sir,” and they said, “We’ve never seen this. In the other services the one stars don’t say anything and the two stars barely speak, and you would never challenge a four star.” And we looked at them like, “Well you’re crazy. That’s what we do. We’re Marines. I mean we speak up. We invite them to speak up. Everybody knows as soon as you walk outside the door that if you get an

order you execute.”

Allison: You figure it out but then you do it.

Zinni: Yes, but they were shocked. They thought it was great, that is fantastic that in our system . . . There was a lot of stuff going on in Washington while I was out at I MEF for example and elsewhere—hearings and everything on operations other than war and the Senate Foreign Relations Committee. Paul Simon and I kept being asked to come back to testify at these things, and I don’t think Shali liked that. And I kept telling General [Carl] Mundy, “Should I do it or not?” He said, “Well if you’re called to testify, come back.” And so I don’t know, General Shali never said anything to me but he was opposed to my nomination, and he told General Krulak that he would support General Neal. And by the way, General Neal and I are very close friends, you know Basic School classmates, and of course General Neal had three tours in CentCom. I mean he was really an incredible CentCom commander. I don’t think you could ever argue that. I would say more qualified because of his time in from the Gulf War and the other three tours as a colonel, a brigadier, and as a three star. So I told General Krulak, I said, “Well if he feels that way—the Marine Corps can’t lose the billet—you’ve got to do it, and if he’s going to support General Neal and General Neal has the credentials, you’ve got to go with General Neal. So he said, “Well, I’m going to fight this.” I said, “Well you’ve got to do what’s best for the Marine Corps.” and he said, “Well, we’ll work this out, but if it doesn’t work out . . .” He said something like, “Well if it doesn’t work out you’re still there because you have another year, and we can figure it out.” I said, “You can’t have two Marines. You can’t have a Marine CINC and a Marine deputy. You know the other services will complain.” So it was

clear to me that if General Neal was the nominee I had to go.

So he said to me, “Well look, if it doesn’t work out I’ll move you to Quantico” and I said, “You can’t do that.” I said, “That would be three tours as a three star general. You’re blocking other guys from being promoted and coming up.” I said, “Look, I will be prepared to retire. I will get myself set up.” *[Chuckle]* So my wife and I raced up to Williamsburg, Virginia. I had called [Lieutenant General, retired] Paul Van Riper who is a close friend—he had retired—and I was starting to look at—he had retired in Williamsburg, and I called him. We came up and looked at some property. I bought a piece of property to build a house and everything, and so I really thought I would be retiring. So I kind of got geared up to retire. Then General Krulak calls me and he says, “I’m going to have [General] Neal submitted as the chairman’s nominee”—I don’t know how he did this—and I’m submitting you as the Marine Corps SecNav, [John H.] Dalton’s nominee from the Marine Corps.” I said, “How can you do that? You can’t have two Marines being nominated for the job. You know the other services will complain.” He said, “Ah, I worked it out. It’s going to go to two nominees.” So I thought, “Even at that, you know with the chairman supporting Butch [Neal] and Butch’s CentCom credentials, which were impeccable.” I said to my wife, “We’re gone. We’ve got to get ready to go.” So I was up here at a conference, and I get a call from General Krulak, and he says, “Congratulations, you got it.” and I said, “What?” “Yes, you got it.” And I thought, “Maybe not. I don’t know. I’m not too sure about that.” And then I get a call from Secretary Cohen right after that; the secretary of defense, saying, “Congratulations, you’re the CentCom commander.” So that really shocked me because I actually was prepared, was all geared up to get out, and I

actually bought land and was prepared to get out. So getting the nomination from the White House then was a surprise.

Allison: That's wild. And did you know Bill Cohen before anything . . . ?

Zinni: I knew him, at that point . . .

Allison: He had just become secretary . . .

Zinni: He had just become secretary of defense and General Jones—Jim Jones was his military assistant. And obviously I knew General Jones very well and through General Jones I got to meet him a couple times, but I really didn't know him that well and I really didn't spend any time with him.

Allison: Yes, that was '96/'97 and right after the reelection of Bill Clinton. He was bringing in a new team—William Cohen and Madeleine Albright, and so he was sort of . . .

Zinni: Yes, and Hugh Shelton.

Allison: Hugh Shelton, yes.

Zinni: And I knew Hugh from down there at—he was SOCom and I was DCINC so we were neighbors, and I knew him.

Allison: Oh, okay. That's interesting how that happened. So did you go ahead and get the place at Williamsburg?

Zinni: Yes, I had the land. I already bought the land. And fortunately I didn't quite start building yet because I was going to just start building a house there. Of course I didn't do it. So I was able to postpone the building of the house.

Allison: So you know you're going to become the CINC at CentCom. Did you plan on just sort of continuing with General Peay's initiatives, or did you have a vision?

Zinni: Well there were obviously things from being the DCINC that I thought I would

change; nothing dramatic but I knew that there were certain things I wanted to do my way. But I felt a lot of loyalty to General Peay and I felt a lot of things he put in play were really great. General Peay sat me down and said, “Look.” He gave me his advice and one of the things he said is, “Don’t let them cut the numbers in the war plan. There will be people in Washington that will want to cut those numbers of ground forces. Don’t let them do it. It would be a big mistake.” But I remembered those words and didn’t. He also said to me, “Look, every commander of CentCom’s time is different. This is a very dynamic environment of changes.” He said, “You need to feel free and have the confidence to make the changes you feel are necessary to anything I’ve done, or if there’s a certain way you want to do it that’s different.” He said, “I would never ever criticize what you do or feel badly if you change something you want to change. As a matter of fact, I encourage you to do it. It’s always good to have fresh eyes, a new environment. You know everybody has their own styles.” So he sort of blessed the idea that, “If you need to change it or want to change it or feel you should, then you should.” I sat down with his political advisor; a guy named Ed Fugit, a career foreign service officer who I really liked and respected down there, and asked his help, one; in getting a PoAd [political advisor]—he got me a super political advisor and an ambassador named Larry Pope who was with me the whole three years. His father was a Medal of Honor recipient on Peleliu as a Marine company commander.

Allison: Okay, we’ve interviewed him.

Zinni: Yes. Fugit said, “Look, my best piece of advice for your first trip out there, don’t go out there with briefings or talking points. Just go out there and listen.” He said, “Nobody listens to the leadership out there. You know we go out as Americans and

tell them, whether it's from State Department or the Pentagon or wherever, we're always telling them what to do and what has to be done and our views. Just go out and say you want to hear their views." So I took that advice on that first trip.

So you know I had a really great experience as DCINC. First of all I followed a great guy in Butch Neal so the reputation of the Marine Corps and the position was great, and Butch left me in good shape. I had a great boss in General Peay and the staff, and so I was well positioned because of the way real Peay used me to be able to step right in. As a matter of fact, I thought, "Man, without this how could you do this job?" I mean it just seemed to me it was such a natural fit. You put the guy in and they fleet up.

Allison: Just sort of throw him in cold turkey.

Zinni: Yes, wow.

Allison: All right, a question about the command relationships. It's an unusual world I guess at CentCom as the CINC in regards to the Joint Chiefs of Staff, your service chief and the State Department and everything. Can you talk about that but in particular how funding issues are handled and command and control?

Zinni: Yes. Well, we'll start with State Department. I really wanted to build a good relationship with the State Department. I really had a great political advisor, I said, who was well connected in the State Department. So he could call in at virtually any level, and they knew him. They respected him. He had spent a lot of time in the Middle East, spoke fluent Arabic, and so he was a tremendous value. I really reached out to the bureau chiefs; the regional bureau chiefs—you know our geography is not the same as the State Department's. So I had four bureaus that overlapped our area—

and reached out to them, invited them to the headquarters, all our conferences. I made a special effort to work with each of the ambassadors in our region. I mean we went overboard to build those strong relationships. I thought those relationships were very, very strong.

There's a natural friction between the Title 10 guys, the service chiefs, and the unified commands. You can't help it. We're at odds with each other on funding. I mean you're funded out of their budgets primarily, although there are other sources but primarily out of their budget. So you know as General [Erik K.] Shinseki said when he was chief of staff of the Army, he says, "Part of my budget goes to support you, and I don't know how to prioritize. I can't measure your apples against my oranges or anything," and it was tough. The Air Force as executive at, like when they took cuts in the budget, they were really good about coming to me and saying, "Look, if we take a 10 percent cut can we just ask that we do it proportionally?" I mean they weren't trying to make me pay a bigger bill, and I thought that was fair, you know. So we tried to work with them. When you wanted forces for joint exercises you're going to take away from their training, when they want to go to Twentynine Palms and the National Training Center. They want to do FleetEx whatever or fly into Nellis and you're dragging them out to do the Bright Stars and other things. When they put their hats on as Joint Chiefs of Staff, they think one way, we think another way, and so they step into the joint world and step all over you. When the programs were being developed you had some people in the joint community that really felt that the joint community needed to have a voice in everything they did; if they bought a ship, a tank, a plane. I didn't feel that way, but I did think that the joint command needed to have a

say on things that required joint interoperability, mainly command and control and intelligence assets. I really thought we had no voice in that. So every service went its own way in trying to klugge these together, and it didn't necessarily work.

And there were other issues. When the services would buy things and decide where to put them, sometimes you didn't have a say. You know they buy a communications system and where does the service want to put the communication system or the nodes? They want to put it where they have bases and people. I want them to put them out in the AOR where you might go to war. And so you had friction on that. I think we felt, as CINCs at that time, that our voices weren't heard as much as they should be. The regional CINCs really felt that way. We wanted a separate CINC's conference with just CINCs. The service chiefs were opposed to that. They never wanted us alone with the secretary or the chairman. But having said all that—and there were friction points—I would say it wasn't hostile. It wasn't personal either. I got along with all the service chiefs. I had differences with them, but I think we handled them in about as collegial way as you could. I would structure it differently.

I would have a standing Joint Chiefs of Staff, full-time positions, and they would be made up of former service chiefs and former combatant commanders, a mix of the two. I think there's enough for a standing Joint Chiefs to do. They could oversee joint doctrine. They could oversee some of the issues on procurement of joint places where you need interoperability. They can certainly oversee joint training and all that. I would like to see the military commands split into three parts; the service chiefs as Title 10, train, organize, and equip; a certain group of unified commands that I would call "The Integrators." These would be like SOCom and TransCom [Transportation

Command]. These are the ones that take the train, organize and equip forces, and their job is joint training, joint doctrine—the Joint Forces Command would be a member of that—and create the joint integrated capability. And I would add maybe a couple commands to those like maybe a joint intelligence command and a joint communications command, something like that; and then the employers, the regional CINCs; the regional combatant commanders. So I think if you had a Joint Chiefs, not in a command role—I'm not advocating a general staff, the same as they do now, advisory but standing and represented of former combatant commanders and former service chiefs. In other words, they would come from each of those three pots. And then delineate these three pots as the Title 10, train, organize and equip; the joint integration commands; and then the regional commands. That's the way I would divide it and then fund them separately.

Allison: But then have a Joint Chiefs over them.

Zinni: Right. Well not over them in a command sense, not a general staff but the service chiefs, frankly I think you can do away with service secretaries. I don't see a purpose. I think all those three groups would report to the secretary through the chairman and the Joint Chiefs as they do now. They communicate through. And to me I would think that would be much cleaner. It would solve a lot of these problems. We didn't feel we had a voice. Charlie Wilhelm had SouthCom, Denny Blair had PaCom, and Wes Clark had EuCom at the time there. I think all four of us—you know that's before African Command and Northern Command and all this—we felt that we didn't really have our views on the table that wasn't always overlaid by the service chiefs who, when they put their Joint Chief's hat on, now having said that it was probably the high watermark

of the influence of the regional commanders.

Allison: Do you think so?

Zinni: Yes, because when [Donald] Rumsfeld came in he got rid of the current CINCs and it all got centralized back in Washington. So the relationships were tough to work out but the personalities and the personal relationships were excellent. Which made it work.

Allison: It goes back to personalities.

Zinni: The Chief of Staff of the Army was Rich Shinseki who I knew, who came down to my headquarters and wanted to do everything, make sure he supported us. Mike Ryan was chief of staff of the Air Force. We went to the National War College together. Obviously the commandant you know. The chief of staff of the Army supported us in what we needed. Again, they were caught in between. They're trying to take care of their service needs and trying to take care of all these joint demands that are put on them. I mean I empathized with them because we're in the same boat and we're struggling with each other, and frankly Congress didn't understand any of this. You know I had a congressman come down to my headquarters and was so happy that he'd cut joint exercises. He thought it was a good thing. I told him he just screwed us. He said, "Well I had the Joint Chiefs testify that joint exercises were bad for them." I said, "Were they testifying as the Joint Chiefs or as service chiefs?" I said, "They're one in the same." And he didn't know. He was confused. And he said, "Well they said that joint exercises take away from their ability to prepare their people, do the training, organize the equipment; their Title 10 responsibility." I said, "Yes. Then when you take away joint exercises, they don't train in the area they're going to fight. They don't

train with the coalition forces they're going to fight with, and they don't train along the lines of the war plan they're going to have to fight." He looked totally confused. So we even confused Congress and everybody else in the way these things worked. So I thought that there were structural systemic problems that caused much of the friction. Of course after I left and it built up for the Iraq War, it even got worse. I mean the hostility. I thought Secretary Cohen did a magnificent job in making sure the OSD [Office of the Secretary of Defense] staff didn't step into our stuff too much, and because of his attitude they were very cooperative. Before he got there, there was some friction between the uniformed military and the civilian. That all went away with him.

Allison: Did it really?

Zinni: Yes. He and General Shelton felt very strongly about if a commander had a view that was different than administration policy or different with their views, that we should be heard, and several times I did. He took me in to see the president or took me to see the leadership in Congress to say, "This is the administration policy. This is our view. General Zinni has a different view. You have to hear him out." He was not afraid to have multiple views go up so that everybody was being heard and the president and Congress could make the best decision here. He wasn't trying to stifle anybody.

As a matter of fact, [he was] adamant that we speak up. His door was always open as was General Shelton's. And General Shelton said, "You can go right by me to see the secretary, too," because you know you're supposed to communicate through the chairman but your command line is directly to him. He was very involved with me. He really was into CentCom. He did everything I asked him to do. He came out to the

AOR frequently, came out when there was no crisis. So he got to know everybody pretty well. He built a great reputation out there, which really helped us. So I've got to say, given what I would describe as flaws in the structure in the system and the way it works, that I have no complaints about the people that were up there. My brother combatant commanders, the service chiefs, Joint Chiefs, the chairman and vice chairman were really helpful to me; Joe Ralston. I mean they'd break their back—they were straight up with you. When they thought you screwed up, they'd tell you. I mean no one hid anything. And of course Secretary Cohen was great, was great to me personally and great in support, and we met with the president a couple times a year. Secretary Cohen wanted us to have time with the president to give our views.

Allison: Individually?

Zinni: Individually. I mean he'd sit in but it was up to us what we said to the president. He said, "Pick one or two things that you really think the president should know and give him your views," and sometimes things I said were controversial. I mean one time President Clinton was going to visit India and not Pakistan, and I told him, "You can't do that. You've got to go to Pakistan." You know his security guys and his chief of staff were absolutely crazy and the policy guys didn't like that, and I said, "You've got to do it." And Clinton did it.

Allison: He did, he went to Pakistan?

Zinni: Yes. And so I could never complain that my voice wasn't heard. I got in a pissing contest with the Senate Armed Services Committee over their support for Ahmed Chalabi and the Iraqi National Congress and everything. Senator [John] McCain raked me over the coals at a hearing and Secretary Cohen said, "You know your position is

opposite of administration policy in supporting this?” And I said to him, “Do you think I’m right?” He said, “It doesn’t matter if you’re right or not, just know that you’re opposite the policy.” I said, “I know that.” He said, “Do you feel strongly about it?” I said, “Yes.” He said, “Come with me.” He took me over to see Trent Lott who was Senate majority leader, [Tom] Daschle who was minority leader, and Newt Gingrich who was speaker, [of the House] and said, “This is the policy of Congress and the law you passed. Administration policy is to support this. General Zinni has a different view. Each of you needs to hear him out.” And one time when the Joint Chiefs and he had one strike option they preferred when we were going to hit Iraq and I had another one I preferred, so we were at odds, he took me to see the president at Camp David with all the principals there; secretary of state, NCI, vice president, and the national security advisor, and he said, “Here’s the position Mr. President. There are two strike options. I as secretary of defense feel we ought to do this one. The chairman and the Joint Chiefs feel we ought to do it. General Zinni feels differently, and you need to hear him and his view.”

Allison: Was that Desert Fox?

Zinni: Well it was, yes, eventually . . .

Allison: Leading up to Desert Fox?

Zinni: Yes, leading up to it. So you know, unlike the Rumsfeld Pentagon, I don’t think anybody in my time could complain that you didn’t get a fair hearing of your views and people didn’t encourage you to voice your views even if they were different. And you know General Shelton made us read *Dereliction of Duty*. He sent us all a copy.

Allison: Oh, he did?

Zinni: And not only sent us a copy of the book, we followed it up with a meeting in Washington, all the four stars.

Allison: To talk about it.

Zinni: To talk about it. And he brought H. R. McMasters in and afterward dismissed McMasters, banged his fists on the table, and he said, "This will never happen while I'm the chairman and while Secretary Cohen is the secretary of defense. If you have something you don't agree with, it's your obligation to come up and speak up and say your views and we'll ensure that you get your hearing and everybody hears it." So it was a great environment. You know I can't complain.

Allison: You never hear that side of it.

Zinni: No.

Allison: You don't. What you hear is the animosity between Clinton and the military during his years.

Zinni: Not at all. I briefed him several times on Iraqi strike options and everything else, and we briefed him when we came back from Somalia. But I briefed him on the strike options. He was very supportive. He really wanted the military to make decisions and not try to take decisions out of our hands, was very much interested in your views and opinions, and really wanted to understand the operations in depth. He wanted a detailed briefing. He didn't try to micromanage but wanted to really understand how the strikes take place and everything that has to happen and the timelines, and always asked if we had all the support and decisions we needed to make it work. As a matter of fact, things like rules of engagement, they were all mine. I mean he gave us a lot of latitude and it was all down to us. So I think that's a myth. I mean his support of the

military was great.

Allison: Interesting. Okay, thank you very much. That's a great explanation of that, and interesting. Okay, Offices of Military Cooperation. Those are the individual countries?

Zinni: Yes.

Allison: And those are State Department people, right?

Zinni: No. OMCs were military. They worked under the DCSS; Defense Cooperation whatever, but also under the combatant commanders, too. So we had authority, shared authority for their programs and the program management that went through the agency at DCSS at the Pentagon, but we had day-to-day charge of them and their people. So you know I would monitor the OMC programs. And like I said, we had extensive OMC programs—a number of them run by general officers in our area of responsibility—a big one in Egypt, a big one in Saudi Arabia, a big one in Kuwait, and also pretty good sized ones in the smaller Gulf states and elsewhere. And then when I became CINC, we ended up getting the five central Asian countries placed under our area of responsibility. So we opened up relationships military-to-military and others out there.

Allison: The “-stans.”

Zinni: Yes.

Allison: Did they have some peculiar or unique issues particular to them?

Zinni: Yes, you know they had come out from the former Soviet Union. Their military was structured along Soviet lines. They had a lot of motorized rifle divisions, even though their terrain and their security requirements didn't need it, so they needed to transition their military. They were still authoritarian governments and they weren't transitioning

very well into any kind of democratic reform. They had issues. You know they were Muslim but not real [hard] core, but they were starting to come back. There were Islamic movements inside their countries. They worried about their own internal security and what was going on in Afghanistan and the influence and intervention in their business by al-Qaeda and others to stir up the pot, like the Islamic movement of Uzbekistan and other things. And they had drug issues because all the drug production in Afghanistan moved to their areas. Border security issues; they had little spats with each other that needed to be sorted out. They were still trying to figure out their relationship with Russia. And so there were a whole series of things that were going on. And EuCom really wanted them.

Allison: They did?

Zinni: Even LantCom wanted them for some reason [*chuckle*].

Allison: I wonder why.

Zinni: But LantCom had been given sort of oversight of them when they were in the transition phase. And Jack Sheehan, remember Sheehan parachuted in with the 82d and all when they were doing exercises out there? So there was a school of thought that we should get them in CentCom. I didn't care, and I think the Pentagon was a little upset with me because they wanted me to fight for them. The State Department wanted them under EuCom. EuCom wanted them. So we ended up with them. They wanted to take all the former Soviet republics and make sure they were sort of going through like the Marshall Center and those processes, but I didn't see any problem with that. Just because they're under CentCom doesn't mean they can't go there. We had Pakistanis and others who went to the Pacific Strategic Study Center, Asia-Pacific

and all, so I didn't see a problem. We had the NESS Center; Near East Strategic Studies and African Center for Strategic Studies that were mixed but there was some friction over that. But we ended up getting involved out there. There wasn't a lot of interest in them. There weren't a lot of resources put to them. So really Southwest Asia and Central Asia was really bad. You know the only relationship with Pakistan was the military-to-military. Everybody wanted to sanction Pakistan. Thank God for the military-to-military relationship, it saved our butt a couple times.

Allison: They wanted to sanction Pakistan for their development of nuclear weapons, was that it?

Zinni: Yes, in response to India's testing. And of course there were bitter feelings there since we pulled out of the Afghan war the first time and left them with all the refugees. They paid for F-16s, and we wouldn't give them to them. We kept their money. I mean it was horrible. And it was the strength of the relationship General Hoar started with General [Abdul] Waheed and General Peay maintained with General Jacoby here and I did with Jacoby here, and then General [Perez] Musharraf. And General Musharraf and I became really close friends. And so relationships were big. I invested a lot of time in them, not only military but with the political leadership. We also got involved in humanitarian issues. We did a lot of work on helping them with their humanitarian relief capability.

Allison: In Pakistan or everywhere?

Zinni: Well the whole region. We did a lot of work on humanitarian issues in Africa, in Central Asia: connecting the national guards, building a viable program for building capacity for peacekeeping humanitarian operations with like East African forces and

all that, a series of exercises and training. I moved Emerald Express, took it away from I MEF and moved it out to Africa and called it Golden Spear.

We did a natural fire level of exercises, the African Crisis Response Initiative, low-level training, national guards from states that had natural disasters that were prone, states that were similar to what Central Asia had, like earthquakes, and like California National Guard and others, or floods and wildfires, and married them up with them. So we did a lot of the military-to-military, also the political, also economic, because part of our responsibility was to protect the free flow of energy, oil, and natural gas. I spent a lot of time in this and a lot of time in understanding the whole system out there from the drilling to the production and the refining and the tanker transport. You've got to understand the system.

The environment was a big issue: water. The environmental issues. I really felt environmental issues were really security issues. I worked very closely with Sherri Goodman who was deputy assistant secretary of state for environmental security issues because we were concerned about water, concerned about oil spills, and things like that working in the region, maintaining the Gulf coalition because that was a full-time job keeping everybody's head in the game, the dual containment out there, obviously the no-fly zones, maritime intercept operations. We had a number of noncombatant evacuation operations in East Africa and also some humanitarian and relief missions in there, too. We had the embassies bombed in Dar es Salaam and Nairobi, and we sent a joint task force in to protect them and to keep security in there, especially in Nairobi until—the State Department, it took them about six months to get their stuff together.

The other great thing was that the Quadrennial Defense Review that Secretary Cohen put out told us to shape the environment. It says, “Shape, prepare, respond.” and shape meant model attitude. Work with State Department. Begin to shape, you know try to shape them into a more stable region the way you think best. We were given a lot of freedom. Dana Priest came down from the *Washington Post* to write a book on the CINCs, and she called us a bunch of pro-councils, you know “Viceroys.” We were out there running the world, and it was true. We were filling up a void there.

Allison: Right. She mentioned something about they had more power than the “military came to outrank its civilian chain of command and influence authority and resources in many parts of the world.” *[read from a clipping]*

Zinni: She was right.

Allison: That’s what you’re saying here.

Zinni: Yes.

Allison: And that was Clinton’s policy.

Zinni: Well Clinton’s strategy, the National Security Strategy, called for engagement—its emphasis was engagement—and it was translated by the Department of Defense into shaping the environment. I don’t think it was ever intended the Department of Defense should lead and be the lead element in all this but it became by default. We had the resources. I mean State didn’t begrudge us. I mean they wished they had the resources but if nobody’s doing it, “You guys have got the resources.”

Allison: In other words there wasn’t friction or competition between you and State.

Zinni: No, I mean they wished they had . . . you know I’m on a study group now that 52 retired admirals and generals are saying, “We need to fund the State Department and

USAID [United States Agency for International Development] and others much better and give them the resources and change of structure.” I mean we’re doing it in the military because they can’t and so we’re helping them in many ways.

But we were involved in the economics of the region, the diplomacy and political side of it. I was sent off to do a number of... you know going back to the Somalia days and going back with Ambassador Oakley, but I was working with Tony Lake; national security advisor, on Ethiopia. I was sent to Pakistan by President Clinton to talk to Prime Minister [Nawaz] Sharif to come out of the hills and deflate the buildup to war. So I was finding myself doing as much on the diplomatic side as I was on the military side, even on the economic side, on the environmental side, on the humanitarian side and disaster relief side, even the informational side. I mean I’m on al-Jazeera and these other things being the face of America in most of these.

Allison: A pretty gutsy thing to do, go on al-Jazeera.

Zinni: Yes, I mean the foreign minister of Qatar says, “You’ve got to go on. You’ve got to put a human face on the U.S. military here.” He said, “The questions will be tough, the interviews will be tough, but you’ve got to show that you’re a human and you care.” They have all these myths about Americans and American military particularly. So I mean my point was nobody argued with that. I would say that—and I’m not just saying me—but I think we became the most recognized faces and we became the face of America in our regions at that time. It’s not the way it should have been but the way it was. I can’t fault Dana Priest for her book. I mean she called it like she saw it.

Allison: But Clinton, his administration had a very proactive approach to handing issues of the world—would you say that?

Zinni: Well I would say this about the administration. Their policies were right. Their strategy was right, the idea of engagement, the idea of America being more interactive in the world at all levels. The words were good. What was not good, especially when you ended up with a Republican Congress, they fought this and they didn't believe in foreign aid. It was a dirty word when you had Jessie Helms as the head of the Senate Foreign Relations Committee, and I don't think the administration fought hard enough for the resources. We had the authority and we had the guidance in the strategic terms. We didn't have the resources to do it though.

Allison: Because of the Republican Congress and traditionalists.

Zinni: Yes.

Allison: Or isolationists.

Zinni: Yes, there are more isolationists but I don't only blame the Republican Congress. I think the Clinton administration could have fought harder for the resources and made it an issue. They just didn't seem to have the energy or the will to challenge some of this stuff I thought should be challenged. So I always said, "If we could have had the sort of philosophy of that administration and the energy of the Bush administration and the commitment to get things done, it would have been the right combination." We wouldn't have the wrong combination, you know wrong policy, right energy maybe now in my opinion. Then just the opposite, right policy and we have wrong energy, lack of. So it didn't really come out to that balance of commitment and energy behind a doctrine that I thought was the right kind of global doctrine in many ways.

Allison: There was so much mistrust it seems like in President Clinton because of his morale shortcomings. It seems like that sort of eroded things. Do you think that had any effect

on his ability to get things done, especially the Monica Lewinski thing?

Zinni: Yes, you know we were striking Iraq just at the time all that hit.

Allison: Yes, the “tail wagging the dog” scenario.

Zinni: Well, actually either way. I remember him one time at Camp David he said, “I’m damned if I do, damned if I don’t,” because there were those that said he was so weakened by that that he wouldn’t take an action and so he would be weakened. He wouldn’t strike. And there were others who said, “No, he’ll strike to cover it up, to change everybody’s mind.”

So whether he did or he didn’t, there was an argument that somehow affected it. So yes, I think overseas they were confused by it more than anything else. Some of the people in the region I was working in couldn’t believe that you would call a president to task for it, you know. They kind of thought, “Well that’s his business.” You know “men will be men” [*chuckle*], and so it was a distraction. It *was* a distraction. I’d be lying—I don’t think it diminished his position as president around the world. From the military point of view, I guess it was surprising and shocking in many ways, but you know the president’s the president. That’s not our decision to execute. It didn’t seem to change his focus. I briefed him before and after on military strikes and operations and [he had] the same level of commitment and interest. The way he went through the decision process didn’t change. I didn’t see any change in execution of the way things went. But obviously that’s not helpful in your relationships around the world. It becomes a distraction more than anything else.

Allison: Right, and the American response to it, which is sort of . . .

Zinni: Well it probably was a bigger issue inside the United States than I detected it was

outside the United States. As a matter of fact since I've retired, I've been out in the region talking at conferences and former President Clinton would be out there, too, and they still like him. They liked his policies, and he was well received out there.

Allison: That's the impression I get, that overseas he's still very popular.

Zinni: Yes.

Allison: Would you say during this time that you were involved in CentCom that the popularity of Americans and the United States was growing or was it waning?

Zinni: I think it was—I can speak from my part of the world out there—it was good overall but beginning to have problems because first of all you had the rise in the extremists. Now it was good after the Gulf War because they really felt the Americans came and did a good thing during the Gulf War and fought next to Muslims and committed to it. I think what began to put a strain on the relationship was then everybody out there understood we had to do the containment, and I think they like containment better than war. I don't think anybody wanted to see us in the region go to Baghdad—there may have been certain elements like Kuwaitis and others—but the U.S. presence, the large number—and large is the wrong term because it's a relative number—but the U.S. presence out there then, and then the air strikes and forcing the no-fly zones, people looking on TV and seeing the Iraqi kids malnourished, the Oil for Food program that Saddam was involved in manipulating, it was corrupt in the way it was run. There were things in the containment that I would say were putting strains on the relationship and so it required constant management. And added to that was the lack of progress in the Middle East peace process. You know people thought for a while with the Oslo Accords and everything else that that was really going to start moving

forward. So when the Middle East peace process stalled or collapsed and then we're striking Iraq—and the U.S. presence out there—the military presence was perceived, even though it wasn't a lot of forces, perceived as being now a presence. And then of course, you have the rhetoric coming out of the extremists with all this.

Allison: You mean the terrorists.

Zinni: Islamists. And so it was tough to manage day to day. I think if you would have taken a poll, they would have approved of Americans, the majority, but it wouldn't have been an overwhelming majority. It required a lot of management day to day.

Allison: Public relations kind of stuff you mean—information operations?

Zinni: Yes, and the way you did things; information operations and visibility. And so you had to explain things like CentCom had no assigned forces. There were no CentCom forces. We just borrowed them. They went in and out. So we don't own forces like EuCom does or PaCom so there aren't any forces dedicated to just CentCom, which shows we don't intend to be permanent out here. We come and go as needed for security reasons. We own no bases. We just share them with you. You know we're here at your—the total number of forces on any given day would average out about 23,000, less than report to work at the Pentagon every day. You've got to remind people of these things because the news always tended to focus on the forces as if there was this overwhelming large number of forces and there weren't. In some places it was a lot easier like Kuwait. They loved us in Kuwait. And other places they tolerated you but it was a little tough, like Saudi Arabia. I think having forces on the ground in Saudi Arabia was a little tough. And the economy wasn't that great then like it is now; the price of oil way up. So there were some tensions, and of course the

extremists constantly raising hell. So I would say it was positive but required a lot of attention and maintenance.

Allison: You had mentioned the associations and the organizations that you maintained a relationship with. You didn't mention OPEC [Organization of Petroleum Exporting Countries]. Was there any connection or any relationship between what you're doing and OPEC?

Zinni: No, not with OPEC as an organization but with the individual countries. I would ask to be able to tour the oil facilities and the natural gas facilities to look at the ports and the tankers and the operations there. Again, it was our mission to protect these things and to ensure free flow of energy. I had to make sure we understood it all. And so country by country, they were great about, "Yes, sure. We're glad to make sure you understand how it all operates."

Allison: Yes, sir. About Africa, what are your perspectives on the creation of an AfriCom?

Zinni: Well let me give you a little background. When I held the first conference—because we held annual conferences in the region, brought in some of the civilian leadership, military leadership to at least talk about the requirement to build a theater engagement strategy at that time, that we did—and I would bring them in and I would hear criticism from like Southwest Asia, Central Asia, Africa, that you know, "You guys are Gulf-centric. I mean your whole focus is on the Persian Gulf," which was true because Iraq, Iran, the war, everything was focused there, and they would feel they were left out of the dialog. So when I was developing my theater engagement strategy, I said, "You know we need to have some regional strategies. I need to have a strategy for East Africa, a strategy for Central Asia, Southwest Asia, a strategy, you know even

for Egypt/Jordan, which is a little different than the Gulf.” So we developed separate strategies and then we’d managed them separately, and we dealt with them separately. There were times we brought everybody together at CentCom but what you did in Africa was certainly different than what you did on the Arabian Peninsula. It was certainly different than what you did in Central/Southwest Asia in many respects. My African strategy really was focused around trying to give them—help [them] build their capacity to deal with their problems.

Their problems tended to be peacekeeping and humanitarian in nature. Africa’s, the continent’s full of these regional/sub-regional organizations like the East African Community, the African Union, all these things. We wanted to work through them to build this capability. I wanted to do it at three levels. We had this African Crisis Response Initiative, ACRI, which was sort of low-level individual squad training and equipping. Special Forces teams out there training to work with them. That was fine but it was very limited. We set up these series of what we called natural fire exercises where we did battalion and brigade level exercises and I had the Marines basically run these kinds of things, and Special Forces, my special ops guys. And when we would do those we would pick an area, come in, and our forces would work with their forces. I would ask NGOs [non-governmental organizations] to participate like World Food and a number of others would come and distribute food.

But a lot of the work was the NGOs set up civil-military operation centers to go through the training, and it allowed them to do some actual work, and then I would bring down the Special Forces doctors, dentists, and veterinarians so they’d go into the villages and work. Instead of doing these one off, like the ARG [amphibious ready

group] would come down—they had some civic action funds so they could paint a school—instead of doing these odds and ends. We'd do them all concentrated.

So you have more going on at the same time in the context of an exercise. I could do some exercise related to construction and leave some things behind. I would bring the ambassadors out and they would cut a ribbon on a school we would fix up and repair. So you'd get some of that work. We did these natural fires in addition to these ACRIs.

And then as I said, I stopped the funding for Emerald Express in I MEF and I moved it out to East Africa—we called it Golden Spear—where we brought the senior-level leadership, civilian, and military, together to talk about these kinds of operations and missions from a policy level, a strategic level. And so those were the basis of our African strategy, trying to build capacity for them. My intent was if anything went down to help them where we could but try to get them to put boots on the ground and us do the logistics, strategic lift, intelligence, communications to reinforce and support operations. We ran several humanitarian operations. There were floods in Kenya where we went in and supported them and saved about 300,000 people. When the embassy went down, we put in security; JTF, for the security until they were able to get up on their feet. We worked really well with militaries out there, good relationships with all of them, obviously not with Sudan but with Ethiopia and Triad until they started to go to war with each other. We tried to stop that. I knew the commanders on both sides, and it was unfortunate because they had been friends and you know just a stupid thing to happen.

Kenyans we really worked hard with and they had a good military commander, a

good military, unfortunately not the best government, and so there were a lot of sanctions on Kenya, which limited our ability to work. You know we needed Kenya because they let us operate out of there for Somalia, and Somalia was a mess in my time.

Allison: It's still a mess.

Zinni: Yes. Djibouti; good relationships there. The French had a base there. We worked with the French in Somalia and other places. So Africa required constant attention. There weren't many resources you could put to there. I found the best way to do it is consolidate your resources. Do big things rather than a bunch of little things that get no real focus or attention. The African command I think is a great idea.

Allison: Why is that?

Zinni: Yes, because I thought, "You know, EuCom, it's a sideshow for EuCom, and if you get the right DCINC in there like General Fulford or General [Jim] Jamerson, they pay attention to it. If you don't, they don't." It's never on the CINCs; he's NATO, SACEur, looking east/west, not north/south in most cases. Even for us, you get so drawn into the Gulf and the Middle East that it's hard to pay attention. So I think AfriCommand was long overdue. I was very supportive of it.

Allison: Yes, sir. We talked about the five -stans. One interesting thing about the five -stans is of course the oil situation in Kazakhstan. It's a big issue now that they're building a pipeline that circumvents Russia. Can you provide any dealings you had with this issue?

Zinni: Yes, there was always a battle. The Iranians and the Pakistanis wanted a pipeline to go south to warm water ports. We wanted it to go west across the Caspian to Azerbaijan

which has a lot of oil, too, and into Turkey and out to the Black Sea. The Russians obviously wanted it to go north to sort of keep their influence. The Chinese wanted it to go east. And you know I think eventually, they're going to have four pipelines and probably the first one will be going east to west.

Allison: *[chuckle]* One to each one.

Zinni: Yes. You have two sources of energy there. You have the oil; Kazakhstan, Turkmenistan with the natural gas because there are natural gas resources there in the Caspian. The Caspian is going to be tough because Russia and Iran really believe it's their lake and of course the Azerbaijanis and the Kazakhstans and Turkmenistans, you know they have a piece of it too; so it's become an issue. Kazakhstan was probably better off because first of all it was in good favor with the West, because it divested itself of its nukes that it had.

Allison: That's where the Soviets did all their nuclear testing, in Kazakhstan.

Zinni: Yes, and Kazakhstan owned some nukes when they split up.

Allison: When they got rid of them.

Zinni: Yes, we bought them off.

Allison: Were you involved in that sir?

Zinni: No, that was before my time at CentCom and after my time at EuCom. And the Kazaks also obviously were going after these energy resources and had the energy. The other -stans were really—didn't have, other than Turkmenistan, they had this positive neutrality doctrine or policy where they were not friends or enemies with anybody. They were just everybody's friend and nobody's enemy.

Allison: Like the Swiss.

Zinni: Yes. And their leader, who has since passed away, was a little shaky. Uzbekistan always had this kind of feeling that they were the more superior of the -stans and the Uzbeks, but they didn't have any real resources. The Kyrgyz—Kyrgyzstan was a very poor country, very remote, very poor. The only thing they really owned was water. No one was going to let them control the water resources or charge for it and their government turned out to be shaky; although, it was the most promising in the beginning. They had a physicist who became the president and then under corruption charges and all this was overthrown.

Tajikistan, in my time, was in the middle of a civil war and it was really bad down there. We didn't really have any relationships since come out of that. I put a lot of time in the -stans. I really thought the -stans were going to be important because of the extremist groups in Afghanistan. And although there wasn't much interest in [them] and again, lack of resources and not much interest, it was just us out there. Much the same in Pakistan; it was just the military-to-military relationship that existed and only by the thread of the two military leaders, us connecting.

Allison: Just personality.

Zinni: Yes. Of course, Iran was sanctioned, and we were containing Iran so it was considered hostile. Although in my time President [Mohammed] Khatami, when he was elected, things seemed to calm down a great deal with the Iranians. When I first got there when I was the DCINC, when I first took over as the CINC, we used to have these ship-bumping incidents and hostile bridge-to-bridge communications. I really thought something was going to trigger it out there, but when Khatami was elected, it all calmed down. And we even began to do some small connections. We lifted the

embargo on Persian rugs and on pistachio nuts, and then we started sending wrestlers and cultural exchanges back and forth. Everybody had big hopes for Khatami, but they never really panned out but it did diminish somewhat the hostile environment. The real problem we had with them is the smugglers that came out of Iraq would get into their territorial waters and they would protect them because they were charging them, you know the gas and oil smugglers. So they made the maritime intercept operations a little bit of a problem.

Allison: What were they smuggling, sir?

Zinni: Gas and oil.

Allison: On tankers?

Zinni: No, they had these small boats that had these gas and oil things in them. They weren't tankers. They were small sort of versions of tankers that they would . . .

Allison: Smuggling gas out and oil and selling it to the highest bidder somewhere or wherever they could get into port and sell the stuff.

Zinni: Yes.

Allison: Now was that part of the maritime interdiction operations?

Zinni: Yes, maritime intercept operations, which is really a UN operation. We ran it for the UN, and we had to report to the UN on that. The inspectors inside Iraq were UN, obviously Ralph McKaus and then Richard Butler in my time and we flew U-2 missions in support of them. So they used to come down to our headquarters and brief us, and we were in support of them. The no-fly zones were in support of the UN mission. You know we installed the no-fly zones but under the UN resolution. So yes, one of the things you had to really watch out there, when they kept saying, "U.S.

sanctions. U.S. sanction,” we had to always come back and say, “UN sanctions.” I did not like the Oil for Food program. I thought it was hurting us. It was being manipulated by Saddam. I was highly suspect of it. And not long after I took over I tried to recommend that we change it in some way; have the Arabs administer it or something, but I didn’t like it. Nobody wanted to go back to the UN and open up that can of worms for fear that maybe the Russians or Chinese would try to overthrow the sanctions. But I really felt strongly that the Oil for Food was going to bite us in the butt. It was working against us, and it seemed like it had a humanitarian impact. Saddam was manipulating it so his people would suffer so their emphasis would be on al-Jazeera.

Allison: And the United States was getting a lot of bad publicity over it.

Zinni: Yes. And I think that there were forces in the UN that were ready to walk away from the sanctions which would have been a mistake, but I thought the sanctions ought to be more military-focused and not economic sanctions because Saddam just made sure the people paid the price for the economic sanctions. And I thought we could have military sanctions maybe take away all the air, a big no-fly zone.

Allison: Over the whole country.

Zinni: We had a security zone in the north. We could have made a security zone in the south where the Shia were because I think we alienated the Shia, and of course the Iranian influence with the Shia because the insurgents were based in Iran and would come into Iraq. So I thought there were other alternatives that we should have maybe done under the sanctions, but by in large the sanctions worked. Saddam’s military was reduced to nothing. It wasn’t training. Conventional forces were nothing. I really believed he

had—you know the inspectors were in there to do three things: ensure that all the nukes and weapons of mass destruction he had were accounted for, ensure he doesn't have an ongoing problem, and ensure he couldn't restart a program. When I first got there, I was convinced of problems in all three areas, that he had a clandestine ongoing program, that he could restart it, and there was still stuff lying around. By the time I left, I became convinced certainly he could restart a program. He had the scientists. You know he had the knowledge. He had things he was allowed to have like his missile program that was short range but that technology could be used to weaponize and increase range. I believed if he had stuff left over, it was now to the point, because now you're talking about 12-10 years later and all that the rocket rounds and artillery rounds are not a strategic threat, they maybe were a tactical threat, and they'd been lying around, those chemical rounds and everything become a problem. He's not training with it or anything. I didn't see that as a big deal. And by the time I [left], especially after Desert Fox and in the last year I was there, I really began to doubt whether he had an ongoing program and I was hearing the same thing come from some of the inspectors, too.

Allison: Who for example?

Zinni: Scott Ridder and others that were adamant before, now they were beginning to doubt there was something there. Although, he was still playing games. I mean he was still trying to—it looked like he was trying to hide something, whether it was to create a false image; of course after I retired and I did some work with the CIA on Iraq WMD [weapons of mass destruction] program and saw the intelligence, I became convinced for sure he didn't have an ongoing program of anything, any significance. He could

have had some left over stuff but not any way threatening but certainly could restart a program left to his own devices.

Allison: So was this before 2000 . . . when you were working with the CIA?

Zinni: Right. This was right up to the war.

Allison: Right up to 2003.

Zinni: Yes. And Iraq was the biggest problem we had in the region. Like I said, we were still in the dual-containment but Iran, with Khatami's election, I guess the best thing I would describe it as is it calmed down. I still saw Iran as a major threat in the region, you know wanting to be a hegemon in the region. Iraq was the biggest problem because for so many reasons, because Saddam certainly was given a clean bill of health and, if he had come out from under, would have restarted problems. He was creating problems in the region because of the images of his people suffering that he was causing. The sanctions were hard and awkward to run although I thought the containment was working. It was relatively cheap because not only did we do it with few troops and none of our own bases—the Kuwaitis and Saudis and others were paying us—you know we had \$300 to \$500 million a year in support of our operations; food, water, fuel being provided. When we went off to Somalia they came: the Saudis, the Kuwaitis, the Emirates, the Egyptians. You know of course they were there in the Gulf War and the Emirates were there in the Balkans with us. So the military-to-military relationships, you had to manage it day to day. You know it wasn't a NATO coalition but it was working. And we had forces in every country in the GCC [Gulf Cooperation Council], plus Egypt and Jordan to an extent, and every time we did a strike or something, I made sure we used assets from all these—everybody's getting

pregnant when we do it, and then they were okay. Sometimes they balked or they questioned it but in the end they always supported us and worked with us. So I thought the containment was working. I thought inevitably my concern was there'd be a collapse inside Iraq and how we would manage that. I saw that as more likely than a strike, you know that Saddam was going to strike anybody because I don't think he thought he could get away with that. Eventually there'd be a coup or something would happen, and I began to really worry about that because I thought whether it's us going in after an unacceptable act or if he implodes. After Desert Fox we almost switched our balance there and I got worried that, "We don't [know] how to reconstruct this country. We don't know what we're in for." That's why I commissioned Desert Crossing to look into what would happen if the regime was gone, either through our doings or somebody else's, and Desert Crossing revealed all the things that could happen, which predicted pretty much what would happen. I thought, "We're not ready for this." You know, "We don't have this so called Phase IV down. Nobody knows whose doing what. Nobody's planning for it." That's what really concerned me. And so when I saw two things happen in the workup to this war, one they were going to cut the number of troops in the war plan, get rid of the old war plan. That really scared me because we thought for sure we needed 380 to 400,000 troops, had to secure the border, control the population and everything else. Then when I saw that there was a pick-up team and no planning for the Phase IV, that's when I really got worried. They're optimistic. When they start talking about liberation and flowers in the street, I said, "No way, it's going to be occupation at best." And then watching the CPA [Coalition Provision Authority] go in there and disbanded the Army after we had spent

almost 10 years telling the Army, “If you don’t fight when the time comes, we’ll keep you in being.” General Peay started the IO [information operations] campaign on that. So when they disbanded the Army, closed the state-owned factories and put people out of work, then went into a de-Ba’athification program instead of reconciliation really alienating the Sunnis. Too few troops, stupid decisions, no appreciation for what it was going to take in the aftermath in the way of an occupation; [it] was not going to [be] flowers in the streets.

Allison: Yes.

Zinni: That’s why I said what I said [*chuckle*].

Allison: [*chuckle*] Desert Crossing, that was an interagency sort of a thing. Could you elaborate on that?

Zinni: Yes. Obviously we were flying in no-fly zones. Saddam would get feisty and they would take some shots at us once and a while. And to go back to the Clinton administration; they basically said, “If he even takes one shot at you, you know one AAA [antiaircraft artillery] site, the entire air defense system is yours. Go after whatever you want.” So we said, “We’re not just going to go after what shoots at us. So if some AAA gun puts some rounds in the air, we’ll take out a command and control site or a radar site or whatever.” So we were going through this and pretty much dismantling his air defense system.

Allison: Operation Southern Watch.

Zinni: And Northern Watch. So the other thing that the Clinton administration said was, “If he throws the inspectors out or they can’t work anymore and they come out, it’s going to be an immediate strike.” You know, “We’re going to punish him for not

cooperating.”

Allison: Air strike?

Zinni: Yes, air strike. “If Richard Butler says, ‘I can’t work here anymore’ or if he throws them out, there’s going to be a strike.” So Richard Butler came out a couple of times. One time he came out—we were getting ready to strike, almost ready to hit—and then Kofi Annan went over there and Saddam agreed and Richard Butler came back in. So there were a couple of false starts.

Allison: That was ’98, wasn’t it?

Zinni: That was ’98. Of course we were ongoing back and forth engaging their air defense system. Every once and a while he’d try these sort of science projects, like he would shoot surface-to-surface missiles in the air and try to explode them. You know a great tribute to our aviators that flew that for all those years. We never lost a plane over Iraq either from mechanical problems or hostile fire. So every time we got ready to strike, we added assets out there so it had a little buildup, that hit, and he would move things around when he saw that. And because our targets tended to be things like high-tolerance machinery and other things, he would move them if the inspectors went out and watching our buildup. So before Desert Fox, General Shelton said to me, “You know we never get great BDA [bomb damage assessment] when we hit them because the guy moves stuff. He sees us coming.” He said, “What we need to do,” he said, “I’d like to outfox him.” That’s how we came up with the title. I called it Desert Fox because he said that. We were naming an operation after Rommel, took all kinds of hits. But I asked my aviators, I said—the JFACC—“Could we do a strike with in-theater assets?” And it was going to be tight but they built a plan so that as soon as

Richard Butler, if he came out, as soon as he was out, we could hit right away. So we built a plan to do that and this was the Desert Fox plan. The thing that got me—here's where my doubts began—the president said—and this was the way General Shelton conveyed it to me—the president said—this is him talking to me—“The president wants you to be able to take out his weapons of mass destruction program if the inspectors are thrown out; take it out militarily.” I said, “Okay.” I mean up to that point I believed, you know everybody believed he had something going.

Allison: Yes, common knowledge.

Zinni: Yes, common knowledge, and I testified to that. You can read my congressional testimony. It's a good playback because I was feeding them what the intelligence community was telling me. So then I said, “Okay, let's get the targets.” When I get the targets from the agency and the intel, and I look at these targets, there are no targets that are WMD directly. Now there were targets that support the WMD program. He's allowed to have his missile program, his Al Samouds, which are the short range [missiles]. So we're going to hit the missile facilities because obviously he could use that technology and could weaponize a longer range one. We were going to hit the Special Republican Guard because they were, in the past, the security for the WMD program. We were going to hit some dual-use facilities because they could be used to produce maybe instead of insecticides they could produce chemical weapons. And we were going to hit this whole set of kinds of things that could be used in a weapons of mass destruction program. Like he had this thing called a Bodini Press. It was this high-tolerance machinery that could produce high-tolerance things like ball bearings and things like that. So when I looked at this target list there were things that could be

used in a WMD program but nothing in there was WMD.

But you know, so be it. That was it. And we threw in a couple of other targets like the intelligence headquarters or whatever. So when we hit Desert Fox we really caught them by surprise. It was going to be the beginning of a holiday. They were working up to Ramadan—it was about four or five days before Ramadan—so there were a lot of people taking off and they were sort of getting ready for the holidays. We hit them as soon as Butler came out. And the BDA was unbelievable. The air planning was superb. The strikes and the execution were flawless. So I'm watching this BDA come back, and I mean it was phenomenal because the president had given me the option to extend the strikes if we wanted to because I wanted a longer period of strikes, and this is where we went up and had this disagreement. The Joint Chiefs and the secretary of defense wanted the shorter strikes so the president said, "Let's compromise. We'll do the short strike package, but if you want to, it's your call," he said to me. "You can extend it into a longer period."

Allison: Were there limits on how long you could extend it?

Zinni: No, it was my call. But the problem was when we executed, the short package was four days, and we did it four days before Ramadan so when we extended it we would be extending it into Ramadan. So there was a psychological—I was ready to do that if the BDA wasn't good but the BDA was eye-watering. It was phenomenal. I mean we got everything on the first go-around. It was phenomenal. And so I was really happy. There were no targets left to hit really. I mean now we would be hitting things just for the sake of hitting them. And then the Ramadan, that wouldn't have been smart in my mind. So we ended Desert Fox, a lot of kudos on the BDA and the execution, and then

we started to get feedback from inside Iraq. The Poles had a mission there and of course the Arabs had contacts there from the region, and they're starting to come up to tell us, "You guys really shook them up." I mean the regime was totally in shock. They'd never seen anything like this. And we were starting to get some feedback that some of the senior generals were almost tempted to take out Saddam.

Allison: You really weakened him.

Zinni: Yes, we really weakened him. Then I was out in the region and the Kuwaitis and the Jordanians both said to me, "You know you're doing all these strikes. You're hitting him and everything else. You're weakening him. What happens if either you get him on a lucky strike or take out his regime or you do so much damage that inside Iraq there's another removal of the regime internally—it's going to be a mess. And it's not only going to be a mess, all those refugees will come pouring out into our countries—what's your plan if this collapses?" So I went back and said, "You know . . ." First of all I said, "Well he could implode." And I never really appreciated that before. But in addition to that, I was having some of the Arabs come to me and say that they were in contact with generals up there that said, "If you bomb for more than a week, we'll act or whatever." And I said, "Well whether it implodes or we go in because he does something unacceptable and take him out," because we knew we could take out the regime and the Republican Guard in the three weeks or less, "it's going to be the same." And I said, "We don't understand what was called Phase IV." It was kind of vague in the plan and then there will be a Phase IV, the reconstruction of the country.

And I said, "Do we really understand what this means because the Kuwaitis and the Jordanians and others out there are saying, 'You don't understand. When this goes,

when you pop the lid it's going to be a mess.'" So I said, "Let's really understand what that mess is." So I asked if we could have State Department, Office of Foreign Disaster Assistance, all the intelligence agencies and a number of other agencies, "Let's all sit down. Let's game out Phase IV. Tell me what to expect." So we come up to Booz-Allen in Washington and run this classified game, what we called it—Desert Crossing, and we go through it, and I'm now listening to everybody's opinion and I'm going, "Holy cow, you've got to be kidding me!" I mean this thing is going to come apart like a cheap suitcase. They kept saying, "The society will fragment." You know, "You've got to worry about what comes across the border; al-Qaeda, the Iranians, Sunni versus Shia, Arab versus Kurd," you know "revenge," and all this, and, "it's going to be a mess; how fragile the economy is, how fragile the health system is." And I'm thinking things like, "What do I do with all the detainees; the POWs and detainees and everything; what's the plan for that?" So after this is done and we look at Desert Crossing, I said, "My God, you know we're ready to march to Baghdad and take down the regime, and we're ready to put 400,000 troops in and try to secure the area, but then what? There's no plan." So I went back in, got everybody together, and I said, "Okay, let's plan for this stuff. Let me see, who's going to be the political reconstruction, economic, humanitarian; where's the guys that do that in the planning?" Nobody, and the State Department's reaction and others was: "We don't do that planning. We're not chartered to do it." Of course now I'm in my, less than a year left on my time . . .

Allison: This is like '99.

Zinni: Well yes. We're well into '99 and we're down to where I have less than a year as best.

And so I said to my staff down there, “Let’s us plan for it.”

Allison: Because you’re going to be left holding the bag, the military is.

Zinni: Yes, once again, and my planners said, “You know sir, we don’t do political reconstruction. We don’t do economic . . .” I said, “Well look. Why don’t we at least set up the problem? In other words say this is what the problem is, this is what we think needs to be done even though we’re not experts, and we’re not going to plan and we’re not going to do it. Let’s at least tee it up.” So my planners kept screwing around with Desert Crossing and looking at what might have to be done, and then of course I left. So when this started to gin up, it looked like we were going to do it, I called down to CentCom and talked to Mike DeLong who was the DCINC down there, and I said, “Mike, dust off Desert Crossing. It might give you something.” He said, “What’s that? I’ve never heard of it.”

Allison: *[chuckle]*

Zinni: You know so Desert Crossing kind of—I was a little surprised because General Franks was involved in Desert Crossing, too, but it got pushed off, and it never went anywhere. So for three years, it just languished somewhere and it never went anywhere, for the planning there was no follow up. And then I was starting to hear that, “Oh, we’re going to do this with 130,000 troops.” I thought, “Oh my God, you’ve got to be kidding me. That’s not enough. The borders are going to become porous. You’re going to uncover areas with no law and order and security and control. This is going to be a disaster,” just from what I knew about it. And then I was hearing, “Oh, Zinni’s was too pessimistic, his assumptions. We don’t buy those. It’s going to be flowers in the street. We’re going to be welcomed with open arms.” I said, “These guys are

smoking something. I mean there's no way."

Allison: You couldn't believe it.

Zinni: Yes. So when they walked away, and General Franks was my Army component commander; my JFLCC commander for three years—he was a CINC for three years—so he had six years invested in the plan and in the numbers, had been through all that with us. So when he agreed to the cut in numbers down to what I thought was a dangerously small force and sort of bought the idea that somebody else was going to handle the Phase IV, I was shocked. I mean I never had the conversation with him after that but I don't know what happened. I thought, "My God, we are going into a disaster here." And I voiced my opinions, as you know, and was called for testimony in front of the Senate Foreign Relations Committee and gave my views and opinions, and we did what we did. I mean to me it was a shock. And in talking to the people out there that I knew; the regional leaders and commanders in the lead up to the war, they said, "You guys are nuts! Don't they understand," and I said, . . .

Allison: Did you ever suggest sending troops in as part of Desert Fox; was that ever considered by yourself?

Zinni: Anytime we struck, what we worried about was there were five divisions in the south fighting the insurgency in the Basra area and General Peay had always, worst case, been called the potential for what was referred to as the Basra Breakout, that if you struck Saddam he might take those five divisions and send them into Kuwait right away; a repeat of what happened before, and of course this time we'd be unprepared. So we built up the forces in Kuwait sufficient that with the forces there full time—and these were basically like MLRS [multiple launch rocket systems]. We had the PrePo

[pre-positioned] sites with the tanks and we had attack helos, and we really worked with the Kuwaitis to build up. They had six armored brigades that were getting better and better—we wanted sufficient force on the ground that we could hold and a rapid buildup to fall in on the equipment that was there that we could hold. Now there were times when we struck that we added some troops in there and . . .

Allison: You had to put troops in there, into Iraq?

Zinni: Well we did. We didn't do it for Desert Fox, not in Iraq but in Kuwait. But they were strictly there for the ability to hold if he came south and then be a base to build up if we had to then go into Iraq if that came. But there was never any part of the . . . the only thing that we could consider was maybe using the MLRS for some strikes in the south, but we never really did it.

Allison: You never thought it would be a good idea to actually send troops in to support a Shia uprising down there or anything like that?

Zinni: No, you know this was containment. We didn't want to own anything. What we were trying to avoid is we didn't want to break it and own it. The Pottery Barn, you know.

I mean our best hope was that some Republican Guard general would march on the palace, take over, and come to us and sue for peace and cooperation, and that's how we would do it.

Allison: Just not ready for that. Okay, sir, let's see. I've got some Iraq questions. You mentioned Chalabi and the Iraqi National Congress and that issue.

Zinni: Yes.

Allison: But that was something that was really pushed by Congress and President Clinton as a viable alternative, but you were really wary of it?

Zinni: Yes. I never even heard of the guy until I was coming up to Washington for something and all of a sudden I got briefed about this Iraqi Liberation Act and that they were going to authorize \$97 million for the Iraqi National Congress headed by Chalabi; you know a coalition of these. So my intel guys came and briefed me. I said, “Who’s this guy Chalabi? What’s going on?” And they’re telling me this guy’s a, you know, “He’s wanted on several warrants in Jordan and elsewhere. He’s seen as a con man out there.” I called people out there. I went out and visited some people and talked to some of the leaders in the Gulf, and they said, “This guy’s terrible!” I talked to some Iraqi exiles that I knew, and they said, “This guy has no credibility inside the country.” But he was selling a bill of goods to the Congress. We had heard that his organization was infiltrated by some of Saddam’s intelligence people. So when I came up here, there was a press conference or something and somebody—I I think it might have been Jamie MacIntyre or somebody—asked me about Chalabi. I said, “Not credible, I mean this idea of supporting them.” You know we’ve had this experience before where we supported some of the insurgencies and they collapsed because we didn’t know who we were supporting. They were infiltrated by Saddam. I said, “If you’re going to take out Saddam you’re not going to be able to do it from inside. There just isn’t anything credible in there that’s going to work. Well I then go to testify—it’s my annual testimony for the Senate Foreign Relations Committee—and McCain just has my butt. I mean he is just all over me, insulting and “How could I say this [about] Chalabi, this great guy Chalabi?” In the meantime I get passed a set of briefing slides that are floating around Congress. There are two Senate staffers that were working with General [Wayne A.] Downing on developing a plan that would put Chalabi and

his merry men inside Iraq, and CentCom would basically be in support of Chalabi. We would give him Special Forces and total air support and he would march to Baghdad. And I said, “This is the stupidest thing I ever heard of.” Well McCain rips me apart and the animosity on the Hill; the staffers were secretly running around with this plan on the Hill, and so I blew the whistle on them and on Chalabi and this whole mess. Chalabi sent some guy down to my headquarters—a guy named Max Singer—and he says, “You know we’d like to show you this plan and all.” And I sat down with him for a half a day, my POAD and I, and I said, “This is ridiculous. I mean this is never going to work.” And when McCain was ripping me apart, I said, “You know there’s some classified things here I’d like to talk about. Can we go into closed session?” So Senator [John] Warner was the chairman, had a closed session—everybody came to the closed session except Senator McCain—and I told them, I said, “Do you know who Chalabi is?” And they didn’t. A lot of them didn’t know. They were told this was a good deal. And the warrants he’s wanted under and what the intel says about his credibility, and even the CIA was distancing themselves from this guy. And I said, “Do you really want CentCom in support of this guy? In other words this guy calls the air strikes and we just execute them. You don’t know what he’s bombing, what he’s doing, and we’re held responsible,” and they already passed the law but there was a lot of grumbling on both sides of the IO about all this. So right away I became the hated man by this little cabal of neocons that had done this to get even with. When I retired, my POAD was nominated by the Clinton administration to be the Ambassador to Kuwait.

Allison: Larry Polk.

Zinni: Larry Polk. And this Danielle Pletka and her husband who were the two behind this thing—she was now Jessie Helms’, you know on the Senate Foreign Relations Committee—she refused to let his nomination go forward. That would let it out of committee, and told him that unless he renounced me and everything and claimed that he had opposed me that his nomination wouldn’t go forward. Of course he wouldn’t do that, the honorable man he is, which made me retire.

Allison: What’s he doing now?

Zinni: He’s retired up in Maine. He does a little consulting work.

Allison: Yes, interesting. Some revenge there. On the war plan; the war plan 1002-96/97/98 then becomes 1003 . . .

Zinni: 1003-98.

Allison: Ninety-eight is the one that I guess actually was morphed into OIF. You had mentioned that the size of the ground forces was about 400-500,000. Is that correct?

Zinni: Three-hundred-and-eighty to 400,000.

Allison: Three-hundred-and-eighty to 400,000, okay.

Zinni: Yes. You have to understand how the war plan is built.

Allison: Yes. Can you elaborate on that?

Zinni: At the end of the war plan you’re adding like National Guard brigades or whatever so you can cut the war plan off at any point. I mean if you’ve run the war plan all the way out, it could be 400,000 troops. And obviously you could request more. But for planning for the JSCAT [Joint Staff Crisis Action Team], which allocates forces, that’s the planning amount, and the TPFDD [timed phased force and deployment data] which shows flow, which is notional. I mean it’s a plan. The plan; obviously you can

change off the plan but it's based on the requirements of what you see and how it goes. And of course, there are variations of the plan, like if the Korean scenario goes first you're in a hold phase and it's a little bit different. So there were variations of the plan, too. But what got me—this is what really I thought was bad because it conveys the wrong idea to the American people—Rumsfeld was saying, “Plans are nothing,” quoting Eisenhower. He forgot the second part of the quote, “But planning is everything,” said Eisenhower, and the planning is what was important. And he was saying, “The plan is old and stale.” It's not old and stale. It's reviewed by the Joint Staff every other year. It is exercised by CentCom every other year. It is exercised on the off years by the components. Our exercise Internal Look, the major ground component one was Lucky Sentinel. Every time there's a change in forces, like General Shinseki came down when he started his transformation in the future combat systems and the striker brigades, he came down and showed me how they would fill the needs of the plan going forward and meet their requirements. When the Air Force got new types of munitions, how they would store it in theater and how they would adjust the plans. We worked with the Kuwaitis for example, the Ministry of Interior, on the reception staging, onward movement, integration of forces, the whole RSOI. To say that plans are old and stale and on the shelf and plans are—you know not that you would execute exactly but the planning is everything: the time-phased deployment, the integration of forces from the time they come in, working with host governments. I mean there is an elaborate amount of stuff that went into that, just like Korea or other war plans.

Allison: You've got to have a plan.

Zinni: Yes, you have to have a plan to operate off of. And it's what you learn in the planning and the work you do to establish the basis, the reception points and everything else and how the flow's going to go, how the buildup is going to go and the sequence and everything else that are key. So I mean to me that administration that came in, you know in the Pentagon under Rumsfeld, was a disaster.

I also think that people wearing uniforms ought to be held accountable, too, because I thought we were [doing] a disservice by the uniformed leadership in not standing up to the civilian leadership in allowing this to happen. And I guess just because I was fortunate enough to be under a secretary of defense that made sure my views were heard, that the stifling of those views was unfortunate.

Allison: If you would have been at CentCom a couple more years and you started seeing this coming down . . . ?

Zinni: I wouldn't have lasted. I could not in good conscience execute the plan that the assumptions were all wrong, the size of the force was too small, the decisions on the Phase IV, disbanding the military, the de-Ba'athification, the closing of the state factories; sending the White House spin guy down to be the public affairs guy at CentCom, you know and the spin doctors. I couldn't have done it. I mean I think it was a disservice to our country and our troops and our interests in the region. First of all, I'm sure I would have been long gone. The Rumsfeld administration would have made sure I was gone.

Allison: You wouldn't have stayed in there.

Zinni: I wouldn't have stayed anyway.

Allison: Yes. There was a \$97 million plan that came out of Congress in 1998.

Zinni: That was the Iraqi Liberation Act.

Allison: Okay, to get rid of Saddam.

Zinni: That was \$97 million to Chalabi, the INC [Iraqi National Congress].

Allison: That's what that was?

Zinni: Yes.

Allison: And that's what you're saying. You didn't support that.

Zinni: Yes, it was a waste of money. As we saw, he couldn't even put the troops on the ground once they said, "This is part of a Rumsfeld plan. Chalabi's going to recruit all these troops training somewhere—I think in Hungary or somewhere—and bring them in." He never could deliver.

Allison: Okay, sir, time to stop for today. Thank you.

Zinni: Okay.

End of Session IX

UNITED STATES MARINE CORPS HISTORY DIVISION

Oral History Interview

Interviewee: General Anthony C. Zinni

Date: 28 April 2008

Length: 03:20:27

Interviewer: Dr. Fred Allison and Dr. Gordon Rudd

SESSION X

Allison: This is the 10th session of the interview with General Anthony Zinni and today's date is the 28th of April 2008, and we're in the general's conference room at Marine Corps Command and Staff, (Breckinridge Hall), Quantico. Dr. Gordon Rudd is with us today. He is here to get amplification on the 1003 war plan for Iraq. General Zinni, would you want to just continue with what you were saying . . .

Zinni: Well, just to give you a background on the war planning itself, obviously when I got to CentCom [Central Command] as the DCINC [deputy commander in chief] . . .

Rudd: What year was that?

Zinni: Ninety-six to '97 . . . General [J. H. Binford] Peay's deputy, obviously we had a war plan for Iraq. I was familiar with it because when I commanded I MEF [Marine Expeditionary Force] the two years prior to that, as the chief operational unit for I MEF under MarCent [Marine Central Command], I attended all the war planning, we inputted into the war planning and . . .

Ridd: Excuse me, when did you get to I MEF?

Zinni: Ninety-four to '96.

Rudd: Okay. So '94, would it have been called 1002 at that stage?

Zinni: I don't recall what it was called then but we gamed it a lot in the internal look exercises, which was the CentCom major exercise for the Iraq war planning. We'd go down to Camp Blanding, a National Guard camp down in Florida and General Peay would have us all down there, and we went through extensive exercise and work on the plan, again seeing it from I MEF's perspective as the chief operational unit for the Marine Corps, then when I got to CentCom as the deputy commander the plan was obviously

General Peay invested a lot in the plan, had really good planners down there and so it was 1000-3 and not only the plan itself was pretty extensive the other plans that went with it, obviously since we were under the two major theater of war concepts. Korean one first, there is a variation if you're second, and all sorts of branches in sequel and General Peay had done a lot of work on the supporting plans like the TPFDD [time, phased and force deployment data], the time phase deployment schedule, he had begun work on the RSOI, the reception staging onward moving integration. There was a lot more to do. He had felt strongly that you needed a land component commander. He had created a deputy land component commander made 3d Army but he felt strongly, and I did too, that you needed one land component commander. The CINC could not be the land component commander because you shouldn't be involved in determining boundaries and fire support control measures. He was reluctant to just order it because he felt being an Army general, ordering this on the Marines would take issue with it because it was logical that 3d Army should be. So the first decision I made when I became the combatant commander is I designated 3d Army, and General [Tommy] Franks being my 3d Army commander, made them the land component commander and told the Marine component commander and the land component commander, the 3d Army commander, to get

together, work up the details of the JFLCC [joint forces land component commander] and if they had an issue or something they couldn't resolve, bring it to me. And at the same time there was not a viable, accepted joint fires SOP [standard operating procedure] and I brought the five component commanders, including special operations component and said I want you all to work on it. I'll give the component commanders a shot at it first; if you can't resolve it, I will resolve it. Now, to their credit the component commanders resolved both. I never had an issue come to me. The joint fires SOP was really a fantastic piece of work and the component commanders and their staffs did it all. There was not an issue they took to me. I felt so good about it I asked—and I'm giving you all this background because it's necessary to work up. I felt so good about it that I told the component commanders in pairs to go to the service doctrine centers to pitch it because I thought it was a good model for a joint [fires support plan]. And they had worked it up. And they did, and the reaction I got from the doctrine centers was "That's all fine but it just pertains to CentCom, and we're not interested," which kind of disappointed me because from my I MEF experience, you have a different one in Korea, you have a different one in CentCom, you have a different one in—you know—all over.

Allison: Joint fires, SOP?

Zinni: Yes, and it should not be an SOP for each one. It should be joint fires doctrine but at that time, I mean, I was satisfied. I was really pleased with them and impressed with the work of the component commanders and the JFLCC really started to come together. It wasn't easy. I mean they had a lot of issues like, "What do you do about Marine air? Fixed wing?" How do you account for does the JFACC. You have to be careful of double reporting. If the Marines are reporting up through the JFLCC and also the JFACC is

tallying things you could get a double counting, but we got a lot of what I would call detailed administrative things that were difficult, but to the credit of I MEF worked on it, Barry Knutson and then after him Carl Fulford. So Barry Knutson, Carl Fulford, they worked really closely with Tommy Franks who had 3d Army and they developed the JFLCC.

Rudd: Was General Fulford the I MEF?

Zinni: I MEF, yes, MarCent let I MEF work out the details.

Rudd: Could I just ask you a couple of questions about this?

Zinni: Sure.

Rudd: Because everything you've tracked, it's fairly in sync with what I have. I'd just like to run through what I've got. Get you to maybe cherry pick it or give me a rudder steer.

Zinni: Yes.

Rudd: I interviewed a retired Army colonel, or he sent me a long, detailed memo, about 18 pages, Richard Stouder . . .

Zinni: Yes, mm-hmm . . .

Rudd: At 3d Army who was a tank commander in Desert Shield, rolled over, became 18th Airborne Corps, operations officer, plans officer for Desert Storm, went to Army War College, then went down to Tampa, worked up, and became chief of war plans initially on General [Joseph P.] Hoar's watch, overlapped into General Peay's watch a little bit I think, then he went up to Alaska, took a garrison command, and then came back to 3d Army, and became I think he was the G3 where plans resided before 3d Army becomes the CFLCC [Combined Forces Land Component commander].

Zinni: Right. I know him.

Rudd: So he had several tours and he references you several times but the bulk of his reference is really during General Hoar's watch and General Peay's watch. What he referenced in the CFLCC issue was that it came up early in General Peay's watch.

Zinni: Right.

Rudd: General Peay was cautious and he said there were some Marines, and I believe he emphasized General [Charles C.] Krulak in particular, who were very adamant that a CFLCC would marginalize the Marine Corps, and it was Stouder's view that it would take a Marine in the role of CentCom commander to really make that possible and that arguably Peay had the authority to do that.

Zinni: Right. Not arguably, he did.

Rudd: Certainly, but that Peay just didn't see it as the appropriate thing to do on his watch, given the turmoil that would create based on his service, and so consequently Stouder said that when you came in, in his view, you fixed it. You know, you declared 3d Army the CFLCC.

Zinni: Right.

RUDD: And because of that, what Marine is going to push back on you? That was the perception that he passed on to me.

Zinni: Right. Yes. The only piece I would add is General Peay did create in 3d Army the deputy CFLCC or JFLCC. I can't remember exactly like five or six things that he would decide like boundaries and a couple of other things that were his, but obviously if there was an issue, the component commanders still could bring it up to the combatant command level, and obviously the deputy with limited and fixed—at that time Steve Arnold was the 3d Army commander—it wasn't a good fix and General Peay said to me, we really need a

land component commander and he was exactly right. I never heard General Krulak's name in this, but he said, "I can't do this because the Marines will think the Army's run over them on this." And he said, "It's really going to take a Marine." So he says, "It's something you should consider doing." And I was a believer in it so it was not a problem. So I made the decision right away. I didn't want to dictate it. I didn't want my staff creating, you know, the diagonal lines or whatever for this, and so I asked Tommy and MarCent commander at the time to put it together and I MEF was designated to work with this. So Barry Knutson and then Carl Fulford worked with Tommy Franks to put this together; how they [employ] Marines on the staff, how they would work together, how they would account for things, how the reporting process would go and they did a good job. They really went into it. They really wanted to resolve it at their own level. We tested it out a couple of times on like Bright Star and a few other exercises. We had a JFLCC exercise. It was a 3d Army Lucky Sentinel, which they did in Kuwait every year. So it became the JFLCC exercise, and actually we asked General Peay to come back as a senior mentor, as a gray beard for that, and I attended a lot, too, and they really worked hard to put that together. They not only put together the procedures and everything and worked it up in an extremely collegial way, and there were no issues that came to me that they worked through. The cooperation was really exceptional but then they began to work a detailed reception, staging, onward-moving integration plan, RSOI, and they were working with the Minister of Interior in Kuwait and I and General Alli [??] who was the commander of U.S. forces there—really turned, too, and now that this looked serious we really were leaning on the Kuwaitis to get their military in shape, do a lot of training, be viable. We had the preposition sites in Kuwait. We looked at the minimum we'd need to

hold Iraqi forces north of Kuwait City because the original plan had us withdraw back to phase line Bravo, whatever in Saudi Arabia, and the Kuwaitis kind of knew that and they thought, “Man you’re . . . you don’t have enough here if you fall into it, either forward presence or units would come early and preposition to hold off.” And there was no motivation for them to be out there to die in line. So General Ali asked that if we could get a commitment that you will defend Kuwait, you will not give up Kuwait territory, that would really make a difference in my army and an investment in a viable military, not just their army but their air force. They had a good little air force, F-18s and all. And I asked Secretary [William] Cohen to make this commitment. He actually went over there and held a press conference.

Rudd: Is this during your period as combatant commander?

Zinni: Yes, this is ’97 to 2000, early on. He went over and said we will defend Kuwait. I then asked the JFLCC, General Franks, tell me what you need at a minimum on the ground to hold, and so we looked at preposition plus forward presence forces. The good thing about Kuwait was the Udari Range, the Army battalion combat teams and the other units really loved it. They said it was better than NTC [National Training Center], because you could shoot everything, and we had fixed wing in there so you got all the support. When the MEUs [Marine expeditionary units] came ashore they would go out there and train, too, and they liked it. The MEUs came in the gaps when we didn’t have Army battalion combat teams.

Allison: I wanted to ask a question about air command and control. That’s always a controversial issue. Was that an issue that you had to deal with?

Zinni: No, what we did—and this is another thing that really gets me because you're always handicapped by the doctrine Nazis. Because we had the dual containment, Iran and Iraq, and we had the rising extremism, I saw that we needed to rapidly build up and redeploy into the region. CentCom would have to go in. I needed some forward headquarters. All my components, when I say components I mean JFLCC, JFACC, I wanted to be sure they had a footprint in there, a forward headquarters. Now, no problem with the Navy, NavCent and his fleet were there in Manama [Bahrain]. The Air Force was running a Southern Watch and so . . .

Allison: And Northern Watch.

Zinni: No, they weren't. The Northern Watch was EuCom [European Command].

Allison: Oh, okay.

Zinni: But they were coordinating, but they were running Southern watch and I had JTF Southern watch at Prince Sultan Air Base in Saudi Arabia and that was the CAOC because it was a combined air operations center. But I double-hatted the CAOC, and this was not advertised or made public, it was the JFACC Forward. In other words, although it was advertised as the JTF and you had to be careful because in the region it would have been a hard sell to say you had JFACC Forward for war plans, U.S. war plans, so that was never said but I had my air component commander—I told him that's your forward headquarters. Now, we actually in the beginning had a little friction between the JTF commander out there in Air Force, a guy, and the air component commander, my air component commander . . .

Allison: Mosely?

Zinni: No, it wasn't Mosely. In the beginning, it was Carl Franklin and then there were others after that but I said, "Carl I want you to man this as a forward headquarters." So JTFSW, the CAOC, was actually the JFACC Forward.

Rudd: So JTF Forward, that's essentially CentCom Forward?

Zinni: No, no, no, it's the air component commander forward. Let me describe. Every one of my components I wanted to have a forward headquarters.

Rudd: Got it.

Zinni: Since we were operating the no-fly zones, under Joint Task, actually combined Task Force Southwest Asia it was called, JTFSWA, and it was run by my air component commander basically with obviously Navy, and French and British because it was a combined operation. I actually wanted that to be my air component commander pole. So I in fact had a JFACC in theater to answer your question.

Allison: Double-hatted

Zinni: Yes, and everybody knew that. There'd be little bumps, like sometimes when the Navy ran things and they wanted to have, they wanted a JFACC role. They worked it out and so the Navy component commander, Tom Fargo and then Willy Moore, worked with my air component commander and that was the JFACC. That was CentCom's JFACC Forward and if something happened it would be built up. My air component commander would build it up and the others would build it up. Now, I needed a land component commander forward so we created JTF Kuwait and my advertisement was to manage the forward presence forces and the prepositioning in theater. We had a preposition site in Qatar and then in Kuwait, and so we put it in there and they rotated command of that with an Army and Marine brigadier general, and it was actually, although not said publicly, it

was the JFACC, I mean the JFLCC Forward. And then I asked Qatar if they would let me put a small SOCC [special operations command element], in Qatar and that SOCC we put in there was actually my SOC component commander's forward headquarters. So I had now the maritime component commander, land component commander, air component commander, special operations component commander, I had all four with the small JTF forward disguised for some other role or really had another role but it was where the buildup would come.

Rudd: Was that meant to be semipermanent?

Zinni: Yes, they were permanent. Hal Gaman, when he commanded, joint forces command came out to see this and made this statement and wrote some stuff up that this was ridiculous, to have all these little JTFs, and that it didn't make sense with all these little JTFs' forward, and I had to say to him, "Hal, these serve a purpose. These are my forward headquarters." And he uses some sort of doctrinal kick that it wasn't right. Of course there is no doctrine. It's whatever the combatant commander wants, and he didn't understand it. Tommy gave them a nickname. He called them lily pads; these were CentCom lily pads that you fall into. And at first I had a hard time with the component commanders grasping this. This is what you fall into. You build it up. This gives you a footprint in the theater. What I needed was a CentCom forward, too. Now, General Peay had set up at ESCON *[inaudible]* village, we had a huge building that they did a lot of work inside and ESCON village, if you sort of repeated Desert Storm, that was going to be the CentCom headquarters.

Rudd: Was that in Qatar?

Zinni: No, Saudi Arabia. ESCON where ONC *[inaudible]*, our security assistance people were, so he had done a lot of work. They actually had a SCIF [secure classified information facility] in there. They did a lot of work in the building, the security, everything else, the hardening, and SCON was the place under General Peay. Now, I thought if something else happened besides a repeat of Desert Storm, under the same conditions, where the Saudis were willing to play, Saddam did something unacceptable, if you had the same conditions, that's fine, but if something else happened where maybe it was difficult to get the Saudis to accept letting us run it out of there or there was a smaller operation, and there were several under my time, I needed some other options. So I had three options to develop. The first one was in Kuwait and I had Tommy Franks who really ran the ARCENT [Army Central Command], the JFLCC, really ran Kuwait, the pre-position sites, the JFLCC up there, but I said I wanted a forward. He wired a couple of buildings in Doha [Qatar], in the preposition site up there. If I had to fall in for a forward headquarters there and build up, I could use it. Now, I didn't like that one. That was the easiest one to get into because the Kuwaitis would let us do it in a heartbeat, but the problem was I have all this buildup up there, I have the JFLCC and then piling on the CINC, it would've been too crowded and probably too forward, and I don't mean for just security reasons . . . So then I had Tom Fargo wire me a building and some assets down in Manama in Bahrain. I had another option in NavCent. I actually used that one, and we ran some of the operations and the strike operations. I actually deployed a small CentCom Forward element there and I operated out of there, and then as I was getting ready to leave, I opened up a third one because my air component commander said the Qataris had offered al Udeid Air Base and it was huge and there were a lot of buildings

there and the Air Force was beginning to look at putting some PrePo [pre-positioned] sites in there, and my air component commander said to me, “Look, I can set you up some facilities here, hardwire the buildings, and be ready to go.” So he now gave me a third option, not counting Saudi Arabia, it was actually a fourth, and that’s the one that CentCom used going actually in the Operation Iraqi Freedom.

Rudd: Could I ask you a few questions about the conceptual evolution of the CFLCC forces?

Zinni: Yes.

Rudd: Coming out of Desert Storm on General Hoar’s watch, as I understand it, not directly from him but through Colonel Stouder, there was a perception that if we have to do this again, it appears that the starting position would be something that looked like the forces for Desert Storm, i.e. two Army corps and a MEF, a numbered Air Force plussed up to be about twice the size of a numbered Air Force as sort of a CFLCC and so forth, and this progresses into General Peay’s tour when you would have been associated both as I MEF and his deputy.

Zinni: Right.

Rudd: One of the things that Stouder makes clear is that he and General Hoar and subsequently General Peay, I could have this from Peay’s interview or Stouder’s, I’m not sure—but they go up to talk to the secretary of defense, the first time is General Hoar talking to [Richard] Cheney with [Paul] Wolfowitz in the room and so forth, and they’re talking about the force structure and the opening line, Stouder’s briefing it, is it will be basically, he didn’t say it this way but it’ll be, the forces would look about like what they did in Desert Storm, two corps and a MEF.

Zinni: Mm hmm.

Rudd: Essentially three corps with a lot of coalition augmentation, but a big chunk.

Zinni: Yes, but you're never paying for coalition. The only thing later on my watch is for the first time in history we allowed a foreign military to be in our plan. It was the Brits.

Rudd: Certainly, but . . .

Zinni: Not at that stage.

Rudd: But what Stouder made clear was the core of it, C-O-R-E, the core of it would be American Army, Marine land formation.

Zinni: Yes, you can't plan for foreign forces. You only do a war plan. The only exception in history was 1003-98 when we allowed the Brits in the war plan. It was the first time ever.

Rudd: And he started getting. . . At this particular briefing, this must have been about '93 I'm guessing, might've been '94, and they got considerable pushback in that meeting about the number of forces involved and this seemed to confuse General Hoar and Stouder as to where the momentum was, and it was at that stage that Stouder started to pick up on a Pentagon perspective that technology and air power would displace ground forces, and General Hoar did not concede that in the meeting and I guess to a certain degree the meeting sort of broke up with two sides established. General Peay, on his watch, starts to have a sort of similar dialogue and at this stage, the first meeting General [Colin] Powell was present. The second meeting when General Peay was coming up and this is Stouder and General Peay describing the meeting, General [John] Shalikashvili was present and, again, there was some pushback in the Pentagon. General Shali kind of tried to calm it down a little bit; but it seems to be a perception that the CentCom, and not any particular service, but the CentCom staff, the Centcom commander was very much concerned that they have large ground forces, predominately American. A coalition would probably

come but as you suggest that was an assumption. About the same time in the Pentagon, as you will recall, we had this doctrine of sorts starting that we referred to as Joint Vision 20-10, subsequently Joint Vision 20-20. This is mainly Shali's watch and that did come up with concepts like precision strike, and focused logistics, and so forth which suggests with technology and some very intensive planning we could do the same thing with less, looking back to Desert Storm. The perception on the part of what Colonel Stouder and General Peay allowed was CentCom was necessarily on track with that, Joint Vision 20-10, Joint Vision 20-20 as a new system, a sort of a revolution on how we could do things that would allow reduced ground forces. It appears that during the period of the '90s that we were on two tracks. This is grossly oversimplified, but the CentCom track was to do this right; it's going to look a lot like Desert Storm, although nobody ever said it quite that way, where as conversely in the Pentagon to do this right we were into a whole new realm of how to measure things. Can you comment on that?

Zinni: Well, first of all I think your timeline's a little wrong because remember when the Clinton administration came in you didn't have Cheney and . . . and . . .

Rudd: Who? Must've been very soon after Stouder got there that General Hoar . . .

Zinni: Yes, well because Cheney was gone obviously and so was Wolfowitz. There was in the OSD [Office of the Secretary of Defense] staff Ted Warner, who was a former Air Force officer, worked for RAND, came over and was in their OSD plans. In General Peay's time, and this is when Dr. Perry was the secretary of defense.

Rudd: That's correct.

Zinni: He was really pushing to cut ground forces, and General Peay really fought back. From the Joint Staff, there was no fight against CentCom in the numbers. They supported

whatever we did. I was the deputy at the time. It didn't seem to me that the secretary of defense at that time, Perry, that there was any strong sense on his part but there was in his staff, and they would actually come to a lot of the briefings in the tank and in that era the OSD staff, the backseaters chipped in a lot, which really upset a lot of the military guys.

Rudd: Because the backseaters were military?

Zinni: No, they were nonmilitary. There were backseaters, and they were OSD staff, and they would chime in, and Warner was the biggest pusher for air power supplanting ground power, and my take [the reasoning] was [if you] get rid of ground power, you could cut the number of ground forces in the major war plans, you could get rid of the structure and it could be a bill payer for more precision air and that sort of thing. General Peay when he left told me, and I knew this from my time at I MEF and the deputy. He said, "Whatever you do, don't let the numbers get cut in 1003." Because when we would go through the gaming and the simulation, the Internal Looks and the Lucky Sentinels, it never was an issue about what you needed to go into Baghdad and take down the regime and the Republican Guard. It was always assumed we could do that in three weeks or less. The real problem became "and then what." And controlling the borders, controlling the populations, the mess we would have was going to require—the number came out to 380 to 400,000 troops in the plan. Now what you have to understand about a plan is you plan it all the way out, worse cases, and at the end of the plan, the last things deploying are these National Guard brigades. You may not deploy them all. You may cut them if things start working out or whatever, and you also have to remember that General Peay started an information operations campaign targeting the Iraqi regular army to convince them not to fight if the time came and we would take care of them. I inherited that from him. We

communicated directly to them through back channels through some of our Arab friends—every time we bombed during the no-fly zone, we dropped leaflets on their regular army garrison saying, “The time comes you don’t fight; we don’t have a battle with you.” When I was on al-Jazeera and other Arab newspapers, this was an entirely programmed campaign. I would say that the regular army was a victim just like the people of Saddam etc., etc. So when Bremer disbanded the army he canned about 10 years worth of IO [information operations] campaigning there that they had been led to believe would happen. But with this is where the numbers came from. Now, when I took over and General [Hugh] Shelton became chairman and Bill Cohen became secretary of defense, everything changed in the briefings. No backbenchers were allowed in. They were gone. So the Warners and everything else couldn’t come to the briefings, and if some came in for a specific reason, they were not allowed to ask questions. It was only the secretary of defense—[he] was the only civilian that could ask questions and only on exceptional cases did they attend. And Cohen was adamant that it was the CINC who made the call on the numbers. As long as they could support it, as long as the assignment of forces and the J Staff, the forces were there because you had to work out the Korea scenario and everything else. So if you made the request and the J staff could provide them, the CINC carried the day. You got the forces you needed. And remember they’re still blistering from [Len] Aspin and [Tom] Montgomery and the tanks *[inaudible]* in Somalia. So telling the CINC he’s not going to get the numbers he wants is a tough thing to do. Even though I would get Warner coming down to my headquarters and he would talk about numbers of forces deploying, nobody ever, ever batted an eye. All of your war plans are reviewed every other year by the Joint Staff and they never, ever in my time

there as the DCINC and the CINC, ever questioned the force numbers we needed. And so the force numbers were solid in terms of the Joint Staff. The secretary of defense had no problem. As a matter of fact we had a flare up with Iran when Louie Freeh felt that the Iranians did Khobar Towers and it looked like we might have to do a strike and that could lead into the war plan with Iran, and Cohen wanted to see the numbers on the Iranian war plans—they were way more than the Iraqi war plan. I mean if you actually put boots on the ground and boy he almost fell over when he saw the numbers but he never questioned them. He never said anything about, “Can you look at cutting these? Or can they be less? Or are you sure about these numbers?” He never questioned and the Joint Staff did the reviews and never had a question. So the numbers were never an issue except for Warner and a very small clique in OSD who never got any traction or any reaction.

Rudd: Could you comment on the phenomena of the Joint Vision 20-10, 20-20? I remember when we were teaching it down here at Quantico and a lot of us weren’t sure—is this doctrine? Is this kind of a philosophy? Is this technology displacing ground power?

Zinni: Shali started it as just a way to look out to the future and to look at the kinds of capabilities and major concepts that would be key. In my view it was never meant to be doctrine. It was never meant to be anything more than a vision and something to establish goals and development of force capabilities for the services to look at. It never, ever affected anything I did in any way.

Rudd: Do you think it, the concept to say regenerating, because they were generating in and just beyond the beltway but perhaps not so far as the combatant commands to any appreciable degree. Do you think they could have been misused or . . . I don’t want to say misused . . . used by other communities to think in terms of technology displacing numbers?

Zinni: Yes, well, I mean first of all it depends on what your motivation is. You know when I used to put out an IPL, integrated priority list, every combatant commander put out what his priorities were. All the services were right in on those. They wanted you to name specific programs, specific—their pet projects. What we did at CentCom, we only mentioned in IPL's capabilities. We never mentioned specific programs. Now, if a service wanted to say, "Ah-hah . . . " You know, "He's got a . . . this is the capability this CINC sees as a priority here, I just so happen to have a program that fits that and therefore I can claim the CINC's IPL supports my program." I didn't argue with the services that did that. I wasn't going to try to tell them what kind of tank, ship, or airplane to buy. For example, you could take ground tactical mobility was an issue with us in CentCom, and so I didn't talk in terms about what kind of Bradley fighting vehicle or Stryker or the triple AV or whatever. That was up to the services. I laid out the statement of the kinds of ground tactical mobility that were critical for us, that we felt were [required]—the protection, the armament, and that sort of thing that we needed in that, and the ability to traverse certain kinds of terrain that we found most likely and so, unlike other services—I'd been on unified command staffs before—combatant commanders listed programs or they just had their component commanders submit and they put whatever the component commanders wanted in there. I didn't do that. I did the capabilities and then if the components of the services wanted to attach things to that, that's fine, that's not my argument. I'd just lay out the capability. This is now the emergence of what was to become joint forces command. This is now when they're talking about LantCom [Atlantic Command] becoming joint forces command, and they're talking about what the role might be. The big gripe from the joint community was

that we had no voice in acquisition. My feeling, Tony Zinni's feeling, is the joint world only needed to have a voice if it was an interoperability issue. Especially C4I [command, control, computers, communication, and intelligence] was my big area. I didn't really care what kind of tank you produced or ship or plane, or anything like that, but the big issue was C4I. Don't be buying systems that don't have joint protocols that are in force because then I end up with two elements that can't talk to each other and you can't pass information, you can't cross analyze, you can't download and disseminate, all those things. Now, you had a different school of thought at LantCom now that was in this transition phase and Admiral Harold Gehman was there. Gehman was of the belief the joint community ought to have a voice in everything and that really bristled the Title 10 guys, the service chiefs, and so this debate was going on. I felt strongly if the joint world gets into that, first of all you've got a law issue with Title 10; secondly that's not our business. I don't care, just give me things that [are] interoperable and meet the capability, what I say in my IPL's [that] I need in my theater. I also believe that the whole joint world didn't need to be involved in this. A CINC isn't operating 10–20 years out. I mean, he is operating in the here and now and maybe a few years out. That's just the nature of it. I really felt give it all to this emerging joint forces command and they could be the spokesman for the joint work and community. They're going to do joint doctrine. They're going to do joint concepts. They're more futuristic so the commander of Joint Forces Command, in my view, ought to have a seat at the table when it comes to acquisition and programs and that sort of thing, and he should be restricted to have a seat at the table, really, and a vote—and a dominating vote—only if it's a joint interoperability issue. But there were others that had a different view. Now, all that came out of that was the

decision not to have a decision, and we sort of played in this JROC [joint resources oversight council] concept, which was the biggest bunch of waste of time I ever saw because the vice chairman and the vices of the services, the number twos, would come down and brief the CINCs, and I mean really just brief us. They would come down and tell us what they were going to do, and if you objected to something or you were concerned about something it was sort of duly noted; you didn't have the voice. I'll give you an example, I can give you a thousand examples but the army had this CBS [corps battle simulation] system. It was a broadcast system and you had to select these theater injection points or something like that. The United States Army—where do you think they want these? Well, they want them in Germany, they want them in all these places, and I'm saying there was none in CentCom's AOR [area of responsibility]. I said, "Men, you're going to fight here. You're not going to fight in Stuttgart or Heidelberg and these places. You're going to fight here." And so that wasn't on their screen. Their theater injection points were where they had forces based. I mean it's a Title-10 mentality. I don't blame them. They weren't investing where we were. So on things like that, I thought we needed a strong voice. Don't be buying a communications system that isn't interoperable. They would buy these gaming and simulations. So the Marine Corps had *[inaudible]*. They had the corps battle system in the Army; you had another system in the Air Force and Navy. When you came to play a game, you did the Ulchi Focus Lens or the Internal Looks and you brought these, they didn't have the same ones and zeroes. I mean you could fly one system. You could fly an F-18 into somebody's system and the calculations on his vulnerability were different than in this system, and it was inconsistent and it was hard to bring them together. You had to have this Rube Goldberg lash-up to

pull it together like you did the communications. In Provide Comfort we had to bring in 16 short tons of communication equipment just to create an interoperable system out there, and this is NATO. So that was my sense, that those were the things that needed to be cleared up and the joint voice made clear but it was never really done and we still had that broken JROC system and frankly, it was a waste of my time to sit there with the number two guys in the services and the vice chairman who basically were not interested in what we had to say. They would sort of listen to it and take into account, but it really didn't affect anything unless they wanted to. The other problem was of course that we didn't have a budget. The services supported us. I had this discussion with Rick Shinseki one time. Rick says, "You know I don't know how to prioritize your stuff in my budget. It comes out of my budget, but I don't know how to prioritize it. How do I take one of your priorities and one of my priorities and make a decision on it?" He said, "I don't even know if I should be making a decision, but that's the way it worked." And like the Air Force was our executive officer in CentCom, just like the Navy is PaCom [Pacific Command] and the Army is SouthCom [Southern Command]. The Air Force is our executive agent and the Air Force would take a hit on their budget. They're like our landlords. We're like a tenant. Mike Ryan was chief of staff of the Air Force and he says, "You know I'm making my guys pay a price for the hit we're taking. I've got to ask you to take the hit, too." Which was only fair, I mean if he was going to take a 10 percent cut across the board because his budget numbers are going to cut back on things, I couldn't be demanding 100 percent for CentCom—he was my landlord down at MacDill Air Force base and my executive agent, CentCom. They were really good. I mean I had no problem. I never had a real argument with the service chiefs in any way. There was a

natural friction. Some of the other CINCs, the relationship with the service chiefs were bad news, really.

Rudd: Is that right?

Zinni: Yes, yeah, I mean I've got to say you always had issues because you were competing for the same buck. Nobody understood the system. I had Congressman Boyer come down to my headquarters at CentCom. He wanted to spend a couple of days, and now, he's a pretty bright guy because he was an Army officer in Desert Storm, a reservist, and he was on the House Armed Services Committee. He came down and he was there and said, "Boy you'd be really proud of us in the House. You know we cut the joint exercise budget by a third." I said, "Proud of you? You just screwed me, congressman." "What do you mean I screwed you?" I said, "Those are my exercises you cut." And he looked befuddled, and I said, "Those exercises we exercise our war plan. We exercise in the theater of operations where the war is going to be fought in the same climate, same terrain, and with the allies we're going to fight with. And you just cut them." He said, "Well, the Joint Chiefs said that we had to cut these exercises. It was working against training their troops." I said, "Now, these so-called Joint Chiefs, were they testifying as a Joint Chief member or as a service chief?" "What do you mean?" Well, I said, "You know the service chiefs are the Joint Chiefs. They're no more joint than the man in the moon, and when they come in they want to go to the NTC. They want to go to Twentynine Palms. They want to do Fleet X whatever, and we're a big pain in the ass to them." I said, "There's got to be a balance obviously and the chairman tries to balance that and submit it." But he didn't understand that. So there's a natural friction and misunderstanding. I bet you there aren't five members of Congress that could explain to

you the structure and how it works. But if you want me to continue on the planning thing, to bring you up where we were. Like I said, General Peay, when he turned it over to me, said you put your own take on these plans. You've got to bring your own personality in.

Rudd: At that stage, when you got the plan, correct me if I have this wrong, it was referred to as 1003-96.

Zinni: Right.

Rudd: There may have been a 1003-94 prior to that but I think that would have moved forward into '96 and then on your watch you brought it forward some more.

Zinni: Yes.

Rudd: Could you talk about the evolution? And you know this evolution from several positions. As I MEF, DCINC, and then as the combatant commander.

Zinni: Right.

Rudd: What I have suggests that there are incremental shifts but they're all heavy in terms of ground forces through '98.

Zinni: The shifts were minor. The shifts were minor. I mean General Peay's right in saying you could have taken 1003-98, my plan, and his plan, 1003-96 and you'd find less than a 5 percent difference and I would agree with that. The three corps was the base, two corps and a MEF, three corps equivalent. And the way we looked at this going down, the heavy corps, whether it was fifth or seventh or whatever would go up the middle and would go to Baghdad. The Marines, the MEF, would be in the south. Basra and along the Iranian border and their job was to seal that border off because we didn't want all this stuff coming in from Iran and that area and they would control Basra and the south and the Brits would be with them and the 18th Airborne Corps would go through the H areas out

there near the Jordanian border, and Saudi borders, and up into the Kurdish area. Now, one option was, but we didn't bank on it that we could get Turkey, and if we got Turkey, some of the 18th Airborne Corps could come down through Turkey. If not, they would come from the south and because of their mobility—the 101st and the 82d—they would control that area out into the west up into the Kurdish area, and then the heavy corps, and depending on the scenario, that would either be 5th or 7th Corps, that would be in the middle. So you had I MEF, 18th Airborne Corps, and a heavy corps in the center. And they had very specific missions. Now, every time we did the exercise, we exercised and Internal Look, Lucky Sentinel, we gamed it and everything else. The thing that always hit us was the drive to Baghdad and defeating the Republican Guards was always a piece of cake. I mean after the first day of the simulation it was a “and then what?” Well, “and then what” was the big mess we sensed that we would have.

Well, let me get to that. So gnawing in the back of my mind from the time I was a I MEF commander was the mess, and we certainly sensed bits and pieces of this, back to even General Peay's time, controlling the border was critical. We were beginning to see, controlling the population, there was an insurgency in the south being supported out of Iran, with the Shia and the Badr Corps and all this business. You had the Peshmerga and the Kurds in the north, you knew that there would be an issue there. What might happen? As al-Qaeda and the extremists were beginning to rise up, we saw that the possibility for them getting involved in a mess like this in some way might be out there, but these are very vague ideas. And so in 1998 when we were ordered by President Clinton to be prepared if Richard Butler and the inspectors come out, to strike immediately when he came out and hit, quote “the WMD targets.” And so General Shelton came to me and said

the president wants you if Butler pulls chocks to take out the WMD program through military strikes. So up to this point I'd been getting the intelligence, and when I did my testimony before Congress, I put the intelligence in that they gave me, "He has a WMD program."

Allison: That would have been about '98?

Zinni: No, '97, '98, and even to '99. I'll explain that a little bit here in a minute. And so I would put it in, "He has a WMD program," because that's what I was getting from all the intelligence agencies. So now I said, "Fine, we'll get ready to do the strike planning." I get the target list from the CIA and everybody else. There're no WMD targets on there. They were all things that could support a WMD program: the Special Republican Guard because they provided security for the WMD program, the Taji missile facility but it was producing al-Samouds that they were allowed to have, the short-range missiles but it could be used to weaponize, some dual-use facilities that could be turned over from pharmaceutical to chemical weapons or, you know, fertilizer. There was this collection of special high-tolerance machinery, the Boldini press and all these things that made things that could be used.

So everything on this target list could be used and now this was December of '98 when we hit with Desert Fox, and I'm looking at this list and I've got to say that's the first time you would have ever heard me say, "You know, does he really have a WMD program?" Because up until now they told me and I believed it. He has a WMD program. Now in the meantime, having watched the inspectors over this time with Rolf Ekeus and then Richard Butler, and they used to come down and brief us because we supported them. We flew U-2 missions under a UN flag in support of them so they always came

down and briefed us on what they were. We actually had people on that team, intel officers. In the early '90s they were finding s——t and taking it down and everything else but they weren't finding anything. It was a lack of cooperation. It was hard to figure out why and you have to remember, and this is important, the inspectors had three missions. One was to ensure all the stuff he had was accounted for and a lot of that was still unaccounted for. Nobody knew what happened to it. But when you looked at that stuff, it was like artillery rounds, rocket rounds, this is the kind of stuff, chemical rounds that are tactical in nature, short range and if they're in a bunker somewhere sitting there, they're not being used or trained with or anything else. Those things are deteriorating. And then the second part was to say, "Does he have an ongoing program?" And then the third part was to say, "Could he restart a program? Did he abdicate, build, or restart it?" And they reported to the Security Council their findings. Only the Security Council of the United Nations could give Saddam a clean bill of health, not the inspectors, which was a fallacy that this administration tried to portray. And so, we believed all three because that's what I was hearing. The old stuff was not accounted for, could still be around, or he's hiding it. He's working on a program, he's got it and that's why he's not very cooperative. And certainly could start it up, still has the scientists and everything else. But after Desert Fox in December of '98, and I saw this target list, I said if we're so sure he has an ongoing program, "where's the beef?" It's not here. And it troubled me and so my 2000, my last submissions I submitted, what they gave me in the hearings, what they gave me but in my opening remarks I said, "I wish we had human and people in there." You know, I made the comments and the caveats up front: I wish we knew more about these programs because I wasn't satisfied. Now, go back to Desert Fox, when we hit in

Desert Fox, General Shelton kept saying every time there'd be tension, or inspectors would be ready to come out, Saddam moved his s——t all around. He knew we had these precision weapons and targets, and he would move the Boldini press. He would move this equipment around.

Rudd: Excuse me . . .

Zinni: Why don't we take a break?

CONTINUES:

Zinni: Well, I was talking about Desert Fox. General Shelton said, "Every time we get ready to hit him, we move more planes into the area. He sees it and he scatters his stuff. He moves some of this high-tolerance machinery and he spreads things out." He said, "It would be really great if we could outfox him." That's where the Desert Fox came from. He said, "Could you do a strike with just in-theater forces without adding anything?" So I had my Navy aviators really look at this, and they said, "Yes, it would be tough but we could do it. We could do it." So we planned one and now the idea, as soon as Richard Butler, if he decides a pull out, clears the air space, boom, we hit. So we had worked up all these targets that I said were things that could support a WMD program and as soon as he came out, we hit and it was just a few days before Ramadan so the Iraqis were not really paying attention, and I think they thought they would see a buildup. We hit for four days of strikes, and they were phenomenal. The BDA [bomb damage assessment], a tribute to the air planners and the pilots, it was beautiful. I mean everything we hit and the BDA results were just off the page. We start getting feedback from some of the countries friendly to us that have missions inside Baghdad saying, "Hey, you really shook these guys up."

We've never seen anything like it." They were telling us stories about we hit the intelligence headquarters. There were guys in the streets with their heads in their hands that just looked forlorn for days and the normal heated rhetoric after strike wasn't there. There were people cheering in the streets and all and you shook them. Then we were hearing some things about well, some Republican Guard generals, [said] had this bombing gone on a little longer [they] might have reacted. Then the Kuwaitis and the Jordanians asked to see me and they said to me, because they were hearing the same thing, "Hey, you guys keep bombing, what if one of you get a lucky hit or what if you generate somebody who comes to take over the regime, and what if you . . . what if chaos erupts? What if this place implodes . . . you know . . . it's on the edge." Their worry was refugees and all the problems pouring over to their borders. So that caused me then in . . . you know . . . now we're into '99, early '99. I said, "You know, we don't understand." The Kuwaitis and Jordanians are asking me, "Would you go in if it imploded? Because your plan has always talked about you going to go get Saddam if he does something unacceptable. What if the place collapses because it's going to be just as bad for us." So I went back and looked at it, and I said, "You know, whether it implodes or explodes . . . " I mean because taking down the regime is . . . you know . . . we're going to do that in less than three weeks on the outside. Our problem has always been, going back to my I MEF days down there with General Peay, it's always been the "and then what." It was the aftermath that worried us. We had some notional ideas about the aftermath; you protect the borders and the problems. I said, "We need to understand this better because the real issue in 1003-98 is not going to be the take down of the regime. It's going to be running this country after you take it down." And it's going to require an occupation. So then I

said, I asked Secretary Cohen if I could fund an exercise up here in Washington at Booz Allen Hamilton, classified, invite State Department, all the security, all the intelligence agencies, Office of Foreign Disasters Assistance, and a number of others to come in and do an assessment as to what we would face after this takedown. And this was called Desert Crossing.

Allison: And that's where that came from?

Rudd: Now, at that stage it was going to be an exercise?

Zinni: It was advertised as a game. And there were some broad scenarios but really it was gathering everybody that knew anything about Iraq to say, "tell me what I'm going to face" when either the regime collapses or we take it down.

Rudd: So in that sense it was also a conference?

Zinni: Yes, yeah, it was a game/conference. I mean basically I wanted to know what the hell we were going to face.

Rudd: Did Desert Crossing ever become anything that a military planner would call a plan?

Zinni: I'm going to get to that. So we come up here and spend a week up here, and I've got to tell you, I sat through that, so did Tommy Franks, everybody on the staff and it is phenomenally amazing in that it predicted virtually everything that happened. And it basically said, and the term they kept using, this society when you go in there is so fragile, it will fragment. It will come apart. And you're going to have all sorts of problems. So we're looking at the borders and we know we've got to watch that Iranian border, control that very closely. We're worried about al-Qaeda. We're worried about all the Shia insurgents on the other side. We've got to worry about the MEK [Peoples' Mujahedin of Iran] and what they may do because they're the Iranian insurgents, and if

they go across, how are we going to handle that? And now, from all of this, the potential for revenge killings and Shia on Sunni, Kurd on Arab, and, you know, all of this that could come about. We came out of that thing and the report is out there on that and the guy you need to talk to if you want to talk to somebody is a retired Army Colonel Steve Kidder.

Rudd: I've interviewed him.

Zinni: Yes, Steve is up at the Army War College.

Rudd: What was the date or the month of that?

Zinni: It was spring/summer of '99. I don't remember the exact month. And so I walked away from that, and we went back to our headquarters, and I said you've got to be kidding me. I mean no one has planned for this. This is sort of the vague Phase IV. But no one has planned for this and, you know—who? What do we do about jobs? What do we do about detainees because we're going to have political prisoners as well as EPWs [enemy prisoners of war] and all this stuff? And I had all these questions that came out. It's not my—I mean it came out of this stuff and remarkably prescient as to what happened. It was clear to me a full-scale occupation was necessary. So then I told my planner, who was Admiral John F. Sigler, I said John, "We need to get somebody seriously planning on this. You know we do the security piece but who's going to do the political, economic, and social reconstruction?" You know, who does that s——t? I went back to see the State Department people. I had an assistant secretary, Eric Newsome from INR that was with us in the game. I went back to the senior leaders that were at the game and everybody else, and I said, "How about you planning this with us? You know, you need to plan it."

Their answer to me was, “We don’t do planning. We don’t do any of this plan. This is not our charter. We don’t do it.” We’ll help you define the problem.

Rudd: Excuse me, State doesn’t do planning—that’s what they told you?

Zinni: Yes, that’s what they told me. They don’t do this planning. They don’t do deliberate planning like the military. I was looking for a counterpart plan and this is what I thought: if there’s some way I could get a counterpart plan—but eventually, and maybe this is too big right now, I’m thinking eventually we should have one plan. I mean I’ve been involved in Korea, all the UFL (Ulchi Focus Lens) exercises over there, Korean war plans when I was in I MEF, and there was no plan for the postconflict. I said, “This is a flaw in our system.” There’s no postmilitary piece to this planning that goes on in this, and we are going to have an occupation.

Rudd: By planning here you mean an interagency planning?

Zinni: Right.

Rudd: You didn’t use that term but there is military planning?

Zinni: Right.

Rudd: But what you’re looking for is an integrated, interagency plan for postconflict?

Zinni: Right.

Rudd: And the other agencies don’t do planning.

Zinni: That’s right.

Rudd: So, therefore, it’s difficult to achieve interagency planning when the planning component is only resident in the military side.

Zinni: That’s right.

Rudd: And it’s nonresident on the interagency side.

Zinni: Right.

Rudd: So you complained to DoD [Department of Defense] or to the State?

Zinni: I complained to everybody. I mean to me it was a deficiency. When I say complain, I mean I wasn't throwing shoes in here or anything like that, but I was saying, we have a flaw here. Now I'm in late '99 and I've got another year to do. I get extended but I've got another year to do. So I told my planners, I said this is what we're going to do: we want to shop this around as much as we can. See if we can get anybody interested, nonmilitary, to help us with this, which didn't succeed. Secondly I want to start thinking about these things. And of course my planners come to me and say, "What do you mean we're going to think about these? How do we plan political, economic, social reconstruction? That's not our job. We're not economists and political scientists." So I said, "Well, look, the least we could do is sort of tee up the problems." There were bits of information that, right away you knew you had to address. For example, one piece of information was Saddam paid directly from the government 50 percent of the paychecks of all Iraqis and another 25 [percent] indirectly. So the day you take down the regime, 50 to 75 percent of the people are out of work, and so our feeling was you can't let that happen. You've got to do something. Now, the wonderful CPA [Coalition Provisional Authority] closed all the state-owned factories because they were state-owned on principle and put more people out of work than you needed to do. We knew we weren't going to disband the army because we had this IO campaign; we're going to keep them together and vet their leadership. Of course the wonderful CPA disbanded the army. We knew you could not have a de-Ba'athification program because you would alienate the Sunnis; they're going to feel victimized and in trouble. We saw a reconciliation program [was needed]. Of

course they de-Ba'athified. So all the things we see—but it's not our job so I leave in the summer of 2000 and this Desert Crossing is still out there. The only official piece of it is the report from that meeting at Booz Allen Hamilton and Sigler's running around trying to shop this around.

Rudd: Could I interject?

Zinni: Yes.

Rudd: What Steve Kidder said about Desert Crossing and please correct if I've got this wrong. Steve Kidder mentions a series of discussions with you when I . . . I think his position was chief of war plans within the J-5.

Zinni: Right. That's right.

Rudd: And he indicated that you had a call from General Shelton at one stage. He started to leave the room and that you said, "No, go ahead and stay." And General Shelton asked you, if you strike, and this may have been aligned with Desert Fox, suppose we get implosion? Suppose we get catastrophic success or something along those lines, what then? And you said, "Well, I don't know."

Zinni: Yes.

Rudd: And then when you hung up, you looked at Kidder and sa[id] or words to this effect, "What are we going to do?"

Zinni: Yes.

Rudd: And to some degree Kidder thinks that he's got this for action to start working.

Zinni: Yes.

Rudd: And in Kidder's view this is the genesis of Desert Crossing.

Zinni: Yes, well but . . .

Rudd: And then it becomes this war game and then a series of, Kidder calls them kind of seminars, conferences at Tampa.

Zinni: Right.

Rudd: And he says initially, you got highly involved.

Zinni: Right.

Rudd: And he was saying the combatant commander does not always take a direct interest in terms of this. But he said General Zinni was on the phone trying to get, in Kidder's view, the most senior people present from the respective agencies. And he said the first conference you pretty much got the crowd you wanted, but it was really a conference that identified the dilemmas, the problem . . .

Zinni: That's the one up at Booz Allen.

Rudd: It didn't achieve—oh, that was up here?

Zinni: Yes.

Rudd: All right, then I didn't have that. But he said that it didn't achieve any resolution.

Zinni: No, it just identified the problem.

Rudd: And then he said over the course of the year, I don't have his transcript in front of me, but I think he said there were about four seminars but he said that your interests were pulled in different directions. Pakistan may have been one of them or something like that.

Zinni: Yes.

Rudd: And he said the subsequent seminars or meetings tended to draw [fewer and fewer] senior people and to his frustration because it was your intent, as he understood it, to have the agencies really engaged in this. And you had that front end but he says as your tour ended that there was a declining interest. Declining interest might be the wrong term but there

was less momentum on the other agencies to participate, and Kidder suggested that you continued to identify the dilemma but there didn't appear to be any solution. And I asked him emphatically, I said, "When you left . . . " which was about the same time that Kidder left, I think the two of you left within a month or so.

Zinni: Right.

Rudd: I said, "What was Desert Crossing?" And he looked me in the eye and he said, "Gordon, it was a slide set." He says it was a briefing. And like most slide sets there's . . .

Zinni: Plus the report.

Rudd: But he said . . .

Zinni: I mean the report is pretty thick. This is from the initial session.

Rudd: And I asked him, "Was this a plan? Was this an annex?"

Zinni: No.

Rudd: And he said "No, it was not." And I said, "Did it ever become one?" And of course Kidder had gone back to the war college but he'd continue to track it. And he'd left me with the distinct impression that Desert Crossing never becomes a plan.

Zinni: That's right. Nobody would take it on. This is where I left it when I left in 2000. I was discouraged that none of the other agencies were willing to plan. And some of them said, frankly, "We don't plan. That's not what we do, and we just don't have the people. We don't have the planning centers. We don't have the same process you do. We don't plan. We don't have the charter."

Rudd: Just for the sake of the record, could you list the agencies? I assume you mean State . . .

Zinni: Well, State Department, Office of Foreign Disaster Assistance, some of the intelligence agencies and . . .

Rudd: Justice?

Zinni: I don't recall, I don't think, I don't know if they were there. I'd have to go back and look at who was all involved. Plus, I don't know who we shopped it around to because then my J5 was shopping it around. And I said, "Try to drum up some interest." And there just wasn't the interest. I mean Kidder was right—at any level. Now this was when I said, "Keep it going. Keep it alive." What my vision was then and this was the worst alternative, the lowest level, we would do an outline plan at CentCom, maybe after I'm gone, and the outline plan would just tee up the problems, political reconciliation, or political reconstruction in Iraq. These are the things you'd better take into consideration, security reconstruction, that, you know, you had this IO campaign against the regular Army. The intent is to vet the leadership. In other words, like a checklist. Since I couldn't reconstruct a society politically, I could at least take everything I know about the society, political context, economic context, social context, whatever, security context, and at least outline it. My idea was the least I could do is if some entity, ORHA [Office for Reconstruction and Humanitarian Assistance] to be—I didn't know anything about ORHA obviously or CPA—somebody would present, hey from all the planning and everything else this is what they saw so at least you could go down a checklist. So, what I saw when I left was, at minimum, a checklist. What I thought could happen, possibly, next best thing would be the interagency would prepare some sort of annex plan to this. The best case, which I wanted to achieve, and had I stayed—had I been in there longer, was my goal, [was] to go to the secretary of defense to try to change the way we plan, and on all these war plans, have a significant plan for Phase IV, not just some sort of vague mention of Phase IV. I left it thinking Desert Crossing will stay alive at some level

and my plans guys have it, now Tommy's plans guys will. Tommy was with us up there.

He knew Desert Crossing. He came.

Rudd: For the sake of the tape, at that time General Franks was the 3d Army commander or the DCINC?

Zinni: No, 3d Army command, JFLCC.

Rudd: But . . . but he was tracking with you on all this?

Zinni: Yes, yes.

Rudd: What happened?

Zinni: Well, good question, save it for his interview. I don't know. I've never talked to him since I left CentCom. Now, I've got to tell you when the workup to the war came, the first thing that got me is that they're looking at Iraq. I couldn't believe that they're looking at Iraq. This is after 9/11 and the fall before March of '03 when they went in—I'm hearing it's starting to heat up, which sounds ridiculous to me, and I'm down at the VFW [Veterans of Foreign Wars] convention in Nashville, Tennessee, the fall of 2002 and I was receiving an award there, already retired two years. And again, I was at the CIA doing the work on Iraq intelligence and it's all the Iraqi stuff, and I thought a lot of this stuff I'm hearing about the case for war is going to go away. I mean they'll focus on Afghanistan and al-Qaeda and what they're doing. And the vice president is the speaker, and I was with the vice president in. . .

Rudd: Vice President Cheney?

Zinni: Yes—in Israel before that, earlier that year when I was doing the Israeli-Palestinian work, and I met him backstage. We talked a little bit, he came out, he gives this talk, and I'm sitting on the stage; I'm actually sitting right next to the lectern and he comes out and he

starts giving this speech. The first half of the speech is what you would expect he would say to a VFW and all crazy veterans and everything, and for some reason I get this strange sense, he's going to make the case for war here. I don't know why because it was nothing he'd said to that point. And it's almost like two speeches. He stops and then he says, and this is a quote, "Saddam Hussein is amassing weapons of mass destruction along his borders to use against his neighbors." I almost fell out of my seat. As a matter of fact, Tim Russert of "Meet the Press" played that tape a couple of times and you actually see me, kind of, "you've got to be s——tin' me look." I mean amassing weapons of mass destruction along his borders to use against his neighbors. What weapons of mass destruction? And amassing under—I mean now there are no-fly zones. We've stripped his air defenses. We fly every inch of that place. I mean, there's nothing that could possibly fit that.

Allison: And you had been mentioned earlier, but I don't think we had that on tape, that you had been briefed by the CIA.

Zinni: I had. I was working with them on it. And then I went back up to the CIA for another brief as the war is getting ready to kick off, and I couldn't believe it. Yes, I'm TSSCI [top secret sensitive compartmented information]. I'm listening to these briefs. I said tell me there's some covert program you didn't brief me in on, that there's something I don't know about here, but it can't be possible. And, nope, there's nothing, you've seen it all. I said you've got to be s——tin' me? There can't possibly be that we're going to go to war on this. I was asked to testify before the Senate Foreign Relations Committee three weeks before. Senator [Dick] Lugar asked me, "General Zinni, is the threat from Saddam Hussein imminent?" I said, "No, sir, it is not. It's not there." This is another Chalabi

hoax. I mean this is unbelievable that we're setting up to do this. So in the meantime I get a call from Gary Luck down at Joint Forces Command—who does the senior mentoring of all this stuff. He said Tommy wants you to come down as they work up and do the war plans; he'd like you to come down and gray beard or senior mentor as they work up on this. I said I'd be glad to do it, took everything off my calendar, hear nothing, hear nothing, waiting. I call Luck and he says, "Yes, he wants you. I don't know why he hasn't called." So finally I call Mike DeLong who was the deputy commander down there, and I said, "You guys want me or not?" He said, "Well, I don't know how to tell you this." But he said either Rumsfeld or [Richard B.] Myers, who was this chairman, called Tommy directly and said you're not allowed to come down here. You can't come down. So I couldn't believe it, and I said fine, fine with me—I cleaned my calendar off for three weeks here, fine.

Rudd: What month was this, ballpark?

Zinni: Well, it was, it was February.

Rudd: Of '03.

Zinni: Of '03, yes, somewhere around there.

Rudd: Before the war.

Zinni: Before the war—so then I said to DeLong, "Did you guys take a look at Desert Crossing? Do you know what you're going to face out there?" He said, "What's that?" I said, "You never heard of Desert Crossing?" He said, "No." So I said, "You ought to check it out because if nothing else, I don't know where it went after I left, but I've got to tell you it will tell you what you're going to face in there and your problem is going to be the Phase IV stuff." And he said basically nobody could find them. They didn't know where it was.

They hadn't heard of it. And, I mean I couldn't believe because at least, even if you just had the slides and the initial report, you would at least have a sense of what you're going to face. Then as they're working up to this, I'm getting calls from some of my old planners down there that are still down there, and they're saying to me . . .

Rudd: Can you give us a name?

Zinni: I'm not going to give you a name. I could but I won't.

Rudd: I understand that.

Zinni: Because they're still around, but they said to me—they called me and said, "Sir, this is a disaster." In the words of one of the planners, "They refuse to use the 'O' word, occupation. They actually think this is going to be a liberation," and I said, "You've got to be kidding me." I mean no sane person looking at this can believe this isn't going to take a full occupation. And then they set . . .

Rudd: The first time you had any sort of dialogue like this was in early 2003?

Zinni: Yes.

Rudd: You had not read ahead that we've got a disconnect in 2002?

Zinni: No, I . . .

Rudd: When the bulk of the planning . . .

Zinni: I was starting to hear late 2002 that they were—that they wanted to cut the force, the numbers, they were going to cut the numbers. They were going to try to do this with [fewer] troops, and I couldn't believe it because if there was one thing that Tommy—he's the guy that drove the numbers more than anybody else. He was the ground component commander. The bulk were his numbers. He did those Lucky Sentinel exercises; he was invested in this, if anything he was driving the numbers up in what he needed. Now, he

had three years as the JFLCC and three years as the CINC, he had six years invested in this plan, 1003-98 and now they were talking about . . . I thought well, Tommy will fight this. He won't let it happen. I mean do they realize—and so when the war kicked off and they were driving to Baghdad and everybody's in heady times, I've got a reporter asking me, "What do you think?" I said, "We're creating black holes behind us that we're going to regret." There was actually an editorial in the *Christian Science Monitor* that said, "Out of Uniform, Out of Touch" that I didn't know what I was talking about; this was a great victory, they're rolling on to Baghdad. And I'm saying it's not a great victory. You have created vacuums along the borders and behind you that you're going to pay a price for them, you know, and everything we know that's going to happen. I then got banned from Joint Forces Command, [Admiral Edmund] Giambastiani wouldn't let me, because I was doing some gray beard work down there with Gary Luck, and he made sure I couldn't come down there anymore so . . .

Rudd: As of . . .

Zinni: Senior mentor.

Rudd: No, I understand that. As of what date, early '03?

Zinni: Yes, somewhere yes, early '03, somewhere in there, mid '03.

Rudd: Did you have a sense in late 2002, the fall of 2002, that there was some reservation about your involvement, your views . . .

Zinni: Yes.

Rudd: Your perception?

Zinni: Yes, it goes back to the mid-nineties when the neocons were pushing Chalabi and I testified before Congress that the biggest mistake we could make was to back Chalabi and his . . .

Rudd: What month?

Zinni: Ninety-eight.

Rudd: Month?

Zinni: I mean it was several testimonies.

Allison: There was a testimony [in which] you mentioned John McCain.

Zinni: Yes, McCain ripped me apart. He was a big Chalabi supporter, and Chalabi and some of the staffers—this Dani Pletka and her husband up there that were staffers on the Senate Foreign Relations Committee—were actually pushing this secret plan that Wayne Downing was involved in on how Chalabi was going to slip into Iraq with a thousand of his merry men and CentCom was going to be put in support of them and Saddam would fall apart. Our intelligence had told us that Saddam had infiltrated his INC, this guy was full of crap, the stuff that he was giving to the CIA was not credible, and the intelligence I knew from agency stuff, too. So they were down on me, the Wolfowitzs and [Douglas J.] Feiths and . . . and [Richard] Perle and everything from the mid-90s. I mean they were trying to discredit me from the mid-90s because this was their plan. They were pushing even before 9/11, this administration, to try to get into Iraq, and they wanted to implant Chalabi as the leader into this thing. This was their whole intention. They made no secret of it and I'm the one that was saying, "This is the stupidest idea ever heard of." As a matter of fact, the administration . . . the Clinton administration decided to accept the Iraq liberation act which gave \$97 million to these guys, and I was vocal about it and Cohen

said, “You know this is administration policy to accept this. They don’t want to fight it and you’re screaming and yelling here.” And I said, “Yes, I think it’s wrong.” And he said, “Now you understand we’re supporting it.” And I said, “Yes.” And he said, “Okay.” And Cohen was good about it. If you objected, your voice was heard. He took me to see the president. He took me to see Trent Lott, Tom Daschle, and Speaker of the House Newt Gingrich to say—to give my views on this.

Rudd: Did you get any pushback from any of those leaders?

Zinni: No, the Senate leadership seemed surprised and their staffers who were there were the ones that had . . . this guy [Stephen G.] Rademaker and his wife Dani Pletka, you know, they’re two neocons. They’re out in the American Enterprise Institute; they were pushing this inside as Richard Perle and some of the neocons were. This was their program and they were getting support in Congress and this from several areas, and so I became the poison apple in this thing in coming in and suddenly people beginning to wonder. I testified before the Senate Foreign Relations Committee when McCain ripped me up. I asked to go to closed session. When we went to closed session he didn’t show up. The other senators did, and I told them about this, and they were pissed because they said they were told this was a good thing; there was all goodness to it, you know. Get rid of Saddam through this, and I’m telling them about Chalabi and the lack of credibility and everything else because this is stuff I’m getting from my own intelligence and I’m getting from the leaders in the region, King Hussein and Jordan who had him under a warrant for arrest for a Bank of Petra scam and several other warrants out there. Everybody in the region says this guy’s a con man, he’s terrible, and he became our, you know, our man.

Allison: Were they just deceived?

Zinni: What I think happened is after 9/11, the administration, the president, was really in shock from 9/11, which I don't blame him. I mean we all were and I think, I mean it was obvious we were going to go to Afghanistan and try to route out al-Qaeda, but I think the president really felt there had to be something more dramatic done, more serious. And here were the neocons saying, "Here's your chance. You go into Iraq; you take down this evil Saddam." And, the country will just burst with the liberation.

Allison: He really believed that.

Zinni: I think he believed it and they conned him, you know. Democracy will flourish and spread around the Middle East. It will be a dramatic change. You'll strike a strategic blow. They were saying things like the road to Jerusalem leads through Baghdad; it will resolve the Israeli-Palestinian [issue]. They were giving him this crap. You'll be greeted with flowers in the street, you know, it's going to be a cakewalk. Wolfowitz, the Iraqi oil will pay for this in itself; it will be over in a matter of weeks. I mean all of us that knew anything about this were like you've got to be kidding! Schwarzkopf, Puller, Peay, and I, all, probably me the most vocal, but we all expressed, everything from concerns and doubts to outright, I guess on my part, you've got to be s——tin' me, you know? You believe this stuff? I mean this is terrible and this is what we were saying. And to me, you want to talk about passion and not being measured, here I saw a repeat of the Gulf of Tonkin incident. We were brewing up something on intelligence that wasn't there that I knew. Secondly, we were about to do it in a way that was doomed from the beginning, too few troops. Thirdly, we had completely misunderstood the aftermath and what was going to be involved, the effect on the region, the effect on us. My one glimmer of hope was when Colin Powell went to the United Nations and got the 15 to nothing Security

Council vote on 1441, the resolution that put the inspectors back in and now Hans Blitx, Mohammad al Baradei are back in. Saddam's cutting up al-Samoud missiles because they exceeded the range. Inspectors are in there full bore. But I'm watching Rumsfeld deploy forces, and you know there's a way you deploy forces in support of diplomacy as a show of force and there's a way you deploy forces to go to war, and it's clear to me the Pentagon is not deploying forces to support Colin Powell up there to have this hammer in position to show we're ready to go and to force the issue at the UN. They're going to war; they're going in . . .

Rudd: At what stage was that clear to you?

Zinni: Oh, it was clear to me when they began deploying because. . .

Rudd: They deployed across the back half of 2002.

Zinni: Yes.

Rudd: Would the summer of 2002, was it starting to become clear to you?

Zinni: Oh no, not the summer, but I would say definitely by the end, toward the end of 2002 it became clear to me looking at the forces that were in position, the logistics, everything being built up. This wasn't the sailing of the forces that . . .

Rudd: My impression is . . .

Zinni: And then, just to finish—as the UN process is moving along—what you would expect, much like it did in the first Gulf War, all of a sudden Rumsfeld comes up and says, “We've got to use the forces because summer is coming and you can't leave the forces in the desert in the summer.” What? I mean, we were in the desert. We were the only ones that went to the desert in the summer out there. We went to the desert all the time in the summer and how many summers have they been in the desert since then?

Rudd: It's my impression, and correct me if I have this wrong, that you were actually becoming aware of this somewhat before the fall of 2002 and I would suggest late summer, because you came to Quantico on the 11th of September . . .

Zinni: Right.

Rudd: For an Erskine lecture.

Zinni: Yes.

Rudd: If you'll allow just a little bit of a diatribe, I understood as a faculty member here, perhaps incorrectly, but I understood at the time that you were going to talk about your recent experience, the past six or eight months as an envoy to Israel and dealing with the Arab-Israeli conflict and because I teach on that I was particularly interested in attending this thing and I'd prepped my students a little bit for it and so forth, and when we went I anticipated a presentation on one topic and you, to my knowledge, you didn't address that at all, and I'll have to go back and listen to the tape . . .

Zinni: Yes, I don't recall being told to talk about that.

Rudd: And in that case, maybe I [have] had it wrong. Maybe it was an assumption on my part. But what you did talk about was Iraq.

Zinni: Right.

Rudd: And I had interviewed you twice before, and the first time I interviewed you was almost 20 years ago on Provide Comfort, and I interviewed you right across the table like I am now, and at the time it seemed like just another good interview. Because I didn't have those tapes transcribed I had to listen to all the tapes. There were 120 tapes I did on Provide Comfort, and I sat on a porch one summer for almost a month and I took notes from each tape to try to get them typed. I was struck by your tape, because after having

done several other tapes, I became very much aware that although you don't use high-handed words and so forth, you speak in complete sentences. Your sentences easily fall into well structured paragraphs and as I was listening to the tape, I said to myself, if I hadn't been there with you looking me in the eye, I would have said this is a script where you were reading off a slide set and I was taken by the fact that when you speak you are much more concise than most speakers. And I'm not saying this to flatter you but I was comparing you to a dozen other people, all generals of your rank that were on Provide Comfort, and I interviewed you again in your home, I think in 2001.

Zinni: Right.

Rudd: On Provide Comfort, and I had a similar experience. When you spoke that evening, the 11th of September, you were not as measured, you were not as deliberate. You're always a passionate speaker but in my view, and I don't mean to sound critical, but in my view you were angry.

Zinni: I was.

Rudd: You were frustrated.

Zinni: Yes.

Rudd: And this is early fall, 11 September, so there had to be something to set this up.

Zinni: It really—from when I first began hearing about it I honestly believed it will never happen. I believed, Colin Powell is the secretary of state; I'd known Colin very well. He's a very good friend and I'd just finished working for him in the Israeli-Palestinian, and I thought clearly, Powell will be the voice of reason and Powell will take this to the United States and will get back on track. I think getting the inspectors back in, doing this sort of thing and I knew Cheney, I mean and I thought the world of Cheney. I thought

now there's a man who has really changed, and I thought—he'll present—you know—I really believed that that cabal of neocons in the Pentagon was dangerous. Rumsfeld struck me as this Neanderthal, pre-Goldwater-Nichols—coming back. Nothing to change everything, pull all the power back in, centralize it in Washington, and I thought the Pentagon's a mess, but I thought, you know, Cheney and Powell, especially, will prevail in this. This is nonsense. I mean we've got to get al-Qaeda and Afghanistan. And I actually had met Karzai in New York and he was concerned about us getting distracted in Iraq and he really felt we could change Afghanistan. If we want a model out there, this would be it. And I said surely cooler heads are going to prevail, in the Congress and in . . . and the first time I began to doubt that was in August...

Rudd: Of 2002?

Zinni: Two-thousand-and-two, because in August . . .

Rudd: Just prior to this Erskine spot . . .

Zinni: In August 2002, I'm beginning to hear that. And again, Rich Armitage is a good friend of mine, Colin Powell, that it has now become that Rumsfeld has the ear of the president, and Wolfowitz and this is, right now this thing looks like it can really happen. And so I had several concerns. First of all it was clear to me this was the wrong war, wrong place, wrong time. But that aside, if you're going to do it, if you at least execute 1003-98 with the troops and everything else that are in, there you could control it. If somebody looks at Desert Crossing, they'll at least have a general idea from what we had of the kinds of problems you face and they'll take seriously that this thing has to go. But now I'm hearing we could do this with a 130,000 troops, it's a cakewalk, it's a liberation, and this really begins to worry me because now not only are we going to get distracted from what

I thought was the real effort, we're going to do it in a way that's going to . . . and I was traveling around the Gulf, too, that year and everybody is telling me if you guys don't get a UN resolution we can't support you on this, and now they may short-circuit the UN. They're going to do this unilaterally. The intelligence that they're basing this on is not there, and it's just going to be weak. I honestly thought they'll find something; they'll find a bunker with some old chemical rounds, and they'll make an excuse like, "Ha, ha, look we found it now." It's nowhere near this amassing of weapons of mass destruction to use on your neighbors but they'll make some excuse for that, but I said we're headed down a disastrous course here and in August I said this is, we are definitely headed for a disaster. And of course, I talked to Rich Armitage and Secretary Powell and they see it happening, too. I mean this really began to worry me. They're actually going to do this damn thing, and I thought, "My God! And the way they're going to do it!" Then, this is what really got me because this is where my troops from my CentCom days really got angry. Rumsfeld starts talking about the plan, and he says at a press conference, "The plan I got was old and stale. The plan I got was dusty on the shelf."

Rudd: When do you hear him say this?

Zinni: I don't remember.

Rudd: This is later?

Zinni: No, no, this is when he's . . . when they're . . . I'm beginning to hear . . . well, I'm beginning to hear he doesn't like the plan and the numbers. Now, the reason this thing hits me and I'm sensitive to it, right after I retired I got asked to participate on some studies that were being farmed out from the Joint Staff coming from the OSD and the secretary of defense. These were studies on transformation and redesigning the force, and

I can't remember the organization or the think tank up there that asked me to participate, but we had General Chuck Horner, retired Air Force four star, and a number of others and the think tank had gotten a contract from the Joint Staff looking at restructure and we got briefed on some models they were looking at, and they were looking at cutting the Army to four or five divisions. I couldn't believe it because when I was in unified command . . .

Rudd: Total? The Army . . .

Zinni: Yes, total, total. Well, active force, from 10 to 4 to 5. And I couldn't believe this because I was one of the CINCs that felt strongly it shouldn't have gone to 10; I thought it should have stayed at 12. The demand for ground forces, I thought, was still very viable. So when I'm hearing this I said "I can't believe this," and they said, "No, the secretary is . . . they feel strongly at the Pentagon now, especially the OSD staff, that ground forces have become passé. They're going to withdraw ground forces from Germany and Japan, four to five divisions." I said, "This is going to be a disaster. Are you kidding me? We need the ground forces now. The era hasn't come." I remember Chuck Horner saying, "That's ridiculous." He said, a matter of fact, all we need now is a few units of what he called gendarmerie, units of about 500 to 800 maybe men and . . .

Rudd: Horner was arguing for reduced ground forces?

Zinni: Yes, he's Air Force. It was his air power. That will just walk the battlefield after [the bombing ensures victory]. And of course I'm doing work down at Joint Forces Command; we're developing all of these airy-fairy concepts, rapid deployment, rapid decisive operations, an effects-based operations, and all this other crap, and it was knowledge-based operations. If you have knowledge and understanding and you dominate, you'll do this with precision and smaller forces. I said, "You guys are nuts."

[Lieutenant General Paul K.] Van Riper and I were saying this. Of course, Van Riper kicks the s——t out of Millennium Challenge. I was there for that, and their whole theory falls apart.

Allison: Oh, they were talking about distributed operations at that time?

Zinni: Oh yes, I mean it was all this garbage, just like unreal so when I hear that Rumsfeld now wants to cut the plan, but more importantly, he is denigrating the planning process, “old and stale, on the shelf.” You know, the war plans, when you get them, they’re assigned to you. They’re reviewed by the Joint Staff every other year. You exercise them every other year at the CINC’s level. Your components exercise them every other year. They’re reviewed constantly when the intelligence changes. I’ve got to tell you, the service chiefs were damn good about when something changed to come down, when Rick Shinseki was coming up with his notion of transformation and these future of combat system[s] and the Stryker brigades he came down to see me, sent his two-star planner down to tell me how they would meet the requirements in the plan as they transformed over time and showed me how it would all fit to meet their JSCAP [joint services capability] requirements and participate. The Air Force, when they developed their sensor-fused munitions now, which could really obliterate an armored unit in a heartbeat. They came down to talk about where we could pre-po it in the region, and how it would fit in the plans, and how they could fall into it. If anything, I will tell you the planning system is alive and well; it’s dynamic; you live and breathe it every day. And here was Rumsfeld talking . . . I told you about the RSOI and working with the Interior Ministry and where the staging units were, how we were going to flow them from the reception staging onward movement integration into the lines. The TPFDD is constantly working with TransCom

[Transportation Command] and here was Rumsfeld talking as if it's some book that gets put in the . . . and then Rumsfeld said, "Remember, Eisenhower said plans are nothing." What about the rest of the quote, "But planning is everything," Eisenhower said. It's what you learn from the planning, you know, and the process is continuous. Then what really pissed me off is I'm listening to this guy Don Sheppard and a couple of other of these analysts on CNN and other [news] outlets, when they're talking about the plan, and those guys had no experience in planning. They were saying, "Yes, the plan . . . " You know, "I wonder about the plan, too. How can you get all those troops into Kuwait? It couldn't be done." If it couldn't be done, the plan would not have been accepted by the Joint Staff. You have to demonstrate the flow and the TPFDD, the staging areas, the RSOI and everything else. You can't just make it up, you know. And the forces are assigned in the SCAP and apportioned out. I mean the planning process is so elaborate and it was all thrown away and in this airy-fairy plan he threw away the TPFDD, the civilian dilettantes generated the force structure for this, and the thing that I'll never understand is how the United States military, the CINC, the chairman, and the Joint Chiefs accepted all this. I mean there's going to be another *Derelection of Duty*. The book's right up there; it's going to be rewritten again. That's what got my passion up and my anger, because I knew we were going to get troops killed, we were going to damage the United States' reputation, if not in the region, in the world. We were going to create a disaster and it's going to be extremely costly in so many ways. And to me, by August, I knew that was going to happen.

Rudd: Let me go back to this particular Erskine lecture. There was a tape of it, and I'll go back and review that but I haven't reviewed it. So I'm working on about four years or five

years of memory on this one, six years. I was taken aback by the passion that you had. I was taken aback by the fact that you were more frustrated . . . I fancied, maybe inappropriately, that I could read you and what I anticipated was not what I saw on the stage and it really got my attention, almost like a brick in the head, that something's up and you're hot. I was also taken aback that this was the wrong audience. If we're going to war, these guys are going. These are the most senior, these are field grade officers, most of them are company grade officers and I was thinking, you're telling them we can't go to war and they've got no vote in this. And I was thinking, why are you telling us? Is it because no one else will listen to you?

Zinni: Yes, partly.

Rudd: And at that stage, and I was trying, conjecture on my part, I was trying to rationalize: why are you speaking out to this group? Is it because you can't get anyone to listen to you?

Zinni: Well, first of all, the second part of your statement is absolutely true. I was literally banned. I mean I told you I was banned.

Rudd: By September?

Zinni: Oh yes, I mean that . . .

Rudd: Of '02?

Zinni: I mean now . . .

Rudd: Because earlier you suggested it was by early '03.

Zinni: Look, it's common knowledge now that Rumsfeld and the Pentagon—if you spoke out and voiced concern, they were out to get you. I mean they were calling me a traitor. They were using Fox News to criticize me, Rush Limbaugh. If you voiced concern in any way or brought up all the things I'm mentioning now, you're considered a traitor.

Rudd: At what stage did you feel that you were banned then?

Zinni: Oh, by . . .

Rudd: It had to be before 11 September.

Zinni: Yes, like I said, August. By August I became convinced that I was voicing my views. I did something in Florida down there and it was . . . I forget what it was but I got these questions because I had voiced it in a news conference in Florida and some lady, some civilian asked me about this . . . are we doing the right thing? And I went on and I said, “No, this is absolutely stupid what we’re about to do, and the way we’re about to do it.” And of course that went all around and got everybody excited. As a matter of fact I was still on contract for the Israeli-Palestinian thing and because I had been voicing my concerns, and now August really strongly, because I became convinced this was a disaster that was going to happen. I was just saying this is idiocy and . . .

Rudd: Are you talking about Iraq or Arab...?

Zinni: Iraq, Iraq, but I was still on contract for the Arab-Israeli . . . that’s when they said we’ve got to end this contract. I had to submit a letter of resignation. I talked at the Middle East Institute before that and this [is] when I still believed that it might not happen, cooler heads would prevail. And the Middle East Institute and I forget when, this might have been July, and the Middle East Institute says, “Look, you voiced your opinion before this that this would be stupid and it’s wrong, but be constructive. Tell us what, for this to work, what would have to happen?” And I gave 10 things about—you’d better get the troop numbers right. You’d better make sure Israel stays out of this and isn’t drawn in, because I was present when Sharon told Cheney this was not his war. I mean there’s a popular belief Israel put us up to this. They did not. And my friends in the IDF [Israel

Defense Force], senior generals said this was the worst time you could go to war. They'd sure love to see Saddam gone but this was not the time that they felt. They certainly weren't prodding us to do this and so it was another myth—but this whole work-up through the summer—but I've got to tell you, it wasn't until August, [that] I spoke out about this because I thought it was stupidity that would just go away but it wasn't until August that I realized that the White House was going to do this. That's when I realized it. Before that, I mean, I gave a talk at the U.S. Naval Institute and MCA [Marine Corps Association], same thing, about this and, what was getting me now, getting to me, was the senior military generals were accepting this. This is what I couldn't believe. And I'm saying to myself, that audience there, those young majors, they're going to come back and say, "Where the hell were you?" You know, I lived through this in Vietnam. Where the hell were my generals? You know? Where were you?

Allison: You were thinking about this . . .

Zinni: D——n right. I mean when I talked to the U.S. Naval Institute and the MCA, there were a bunch of junior officers in there. My son's a Marine; he's a captain now. I mean, he just got back from Iraq. Before that he was in Afghanistan. Before that you're looking at; this is the charge of the light brigade. What do you do, sit on your horse and salute? You know? And I'm looking for the senior leadership. I'm looking for the chairman, and the Joint Chiefs, and the vice chairman, and the combatant commanders to stand up and I guess I was spoiled because in my time Cohen and—I told this story a thousand times—Hugh Shelton made us read *Derelection of Duty*. He sent it to us and in it, when we received it from the chairman, there was a note saying read this book and in three weeks you're coming to Washington, DC, for a breakfast. H. R. McMaster is going to tell you

about the book and we're going to discuss it. He sent it to all the service chiefs. He sent it to the vice chairman. He sent it to all the combatant commanders, and he sent it to the commandant of the Coast Guard. We come up to Washington, 17 four-star generals sitting around a table, Hugh Shelton, H. R. McMaster comes up and tells a story which most of us knew and then we read the book and then he dismisses H. R. He stands up, Shelton's like eight feet ten or whatever, bangs his fist on the table and says, "This will never happen while I'm chairman of the Joint Chiefs Of Staff." He said, "It will never happen while Secretary Cohen is secretary of defense. If you've got something burning in your gut, if you feel we're doing something wrong, you come in anytime and you go right past me to the secretary's office." And Secretary Cohen said the same thing but he said, "We will never have this." You know, "We will not be stifled. We will not be shut up, and if you feel strongly about something that the policy is wrong or we're making a mistake, you have an obligation to speak up."

Rudd: Can you get that down to a month?

Zinni: It was January of '98 I think. January of '98?

Allison: Right after you took over at CentCom?

Zinni: Yeah, I took over in August '97. I still had the note. I mean, that he sent and Cohen felt the same way.

Rudd: Let me explore one other issue. What has confused me for some time is when the administration becomes disenchanted with you and we go from a situation where you are presidential envoy, very few four stars . . .

Zinni: Secretary of State's envoy, made clear to me by the president.

Rudd: Oh, okay, all right. You were the secretary of state's envoy to the Middle East but, I mean that's a political role.

Zinni: Right. Special advisor to the secretary of state for the Middle East ...

Rudd: Most four-star generals don't get recalled for that sort of role because it's different than their natural role. Arguably, because of your time in Central Command and your time in the Middle East, there was a logic to you being selected for that, but the perception was, or certainly for my part was, that the administration had confidence in you for such a high-profile, very delicate in many ways sort of role, that had all sorts of political . . .

Zinni: Yes, I briefed the president. The vice president came out—I was with the vice president for a number of days on this and of course Colin Powell every day.

Rudd: And as I recall, that was predominately, correct me if I'm wrong, the predominance of that work was the spring of 2002?

Zinni: It was . . . no, it was 2001 beginning in November, actually, I was appointed in the summer of 2001. I went over the first time in November of 2001. I went back in early February of 2002 and back again in spring of 2003.

Rudd: Oh, in 2003?

Zinni: I mean two. I'm sorry 2002.

Rudd: In 2002? So as late as the spring of 2002 you were an active player?

Zinni: Yes.

Rudd: Within the foreign policy of the Bush administration?

Zinni: Yes, as a matter of fact they didn't terminate my contract. I came back in April of 2002 from the last session, and although [Ariel] Sharon had thrown in the towel, he wasn't going to do it anymore after the Passover bombing and all the other things that took

place. They were still keeping it alive and they kept me on the contract, but by the time July rolled around, because I was beginning to talk about it, they made me, they asked me to resign.

Rudd: Somewhere between April and August you appear to become persona non grata with the Bush administration.

Zinni: Yes, I began to speak out about this idiocy that they were about to embark on in Iraq.

Rudd: When is it clear to you that you're, my term, persona non grata within the Bush administration?

Zinni: When I get . . . in the summer . . .

Rudd: Is it as late as August or earlier than that?

Zinni: In the summer of 2002, and I think it might have been July when I gave that talk to the Middle East Institute, when I said that these are the 10 things that you'd better get right if you're going to go in. I still don't think that they would actually do it but I said, "If you're going to do this, you'd better do these things." That was the speech that killed it. That's what they . . . that's when they . . .

Rudd: Did somebody call you? Did you get immediate pushback?

Zinni: No, I mean, I had friends in the State Department that said, "You know, you'll never be used again . . ."

Rudd: You crossed the line?

Zinni: You'll never be called again and it was clear to me and that's when I sent the letter of resignation in, and then there were reports coming out in the Pentagon that [Captain William J.] Luti or somebody called me a traitor and a turncoat, and I was getting this kind of feedback and that's when I was beginning to get banned from the Joint Forces

Command from doing the gray beard work. So I mean it was all beginning to happen by late summer 2002.

Rudd: I thought you said, maybe I misunderstood you that you didn't start getting those sort of signals until the late fall of 2002.

Zinni: No, I said in August of 2002 is when I became convinced that they were going to actually do it. I thought up to that time, this will never happen. I thought either A) they'll come to their senses and the president won't do this or B) Colin Powell and the United Nations is going to get a UN track that will make this, you know . . .

Rudd: But, what I was trying to track is when did they cut you off? When did they not want to hear from you anymore?

Zinni: I mean—you're looking for a specific incident or date. It didn't happen that way.

Rudd: So it was . . .

Zinni: They don't do it that way because they don't want it to look like—what they do is just slowly try to marginalize you and discredit you. They're not going to punish you in some way or say we cut you off or we fired you. I mean even when I said I wanted to get out of the State Department; I mean I'm not going to be used, fine. The contract—I had some problems with it because as long as I . . . I would not accept any compensation from the State Department, but as long as I was under contract with them to do this Middle East peace process work, there were certain things I had to report and do other things on, I mean financial stuff and other things so I wanted to end this. I said, "You're not going to use me. Let's end it." Well, they didn't want to end it from their end so they didn't want it to look like I was fired. So they said you have to resign. So I sent a one-line letter, as of such and such a date, I think it was July, I resign.

Rudd: July of '02. Can I go back and ask on a different track I'd like to talk about your relationship . . . and you can go back to I MEF if you choose but particularly during the period that you were the commander at Central Command, your relationship with the J5 and again, please allow a bit of a diatribe so you can figure out where I think I've got it and maybe I don't have it. The J5, habitually, until very recently . . .

Zinni: Joint Staff J5?

Rudd: No, the CentCom . . .

Zinni: Oh, CentCom, yes.

Rudd: CentCom J5 has been until very recently, habitually a two-star admiral, who (conjecture on my part), rarely has a developed background in planning.

Zinni: Right.

Rudd: He and J5 arguably ha[ve] two realms, plans and policy, and policy has different phenomena to it than planning. They're related and they're in the same branch. Within J5 there is a position called chief of war plans. Which is habitually, I'm not sure always but it has habitually been an Army colonel with some developed experience in planning.

Zinni: Right.

Rudd: Or if not as a planner certainly, you know, prior battalion command, Army War College .

. .

Zinni: Oh yeah . . . yeah, yeah.

Rudd: Significant operational command and probably some planning experience. And that's—he doesn't go straight into that. He usually comes out of War College, comes in as a subordinate position to that, and then ramps up to that position on a three-, possibly four-year tour . . .

Zinni: Right.

Rudd: At CentCom. The one that seems to have the highest profile in that role on your watch is Steve Kidder.

Zinni: Right.

Rudd: There must have been somebody before him. Stouder I think had rolled . . .

Zinni: Roland Tiso.

Rudd: Tiso.

Zinni: Who became my . . .

Rudd: Tiso was before Kidder?

Zinni: Yes, and he became my executive officer. And Tiso had been the war planner when I was in I MEF. He had a long time—he's still there as a matter of fact, at CentCom. He's retired now but he still works under contract. And so it was Tiso and then Kidder and then Tiso became my executive officer.

Rudd: What I'm trying to capture is the chemistry, and it's going to vary I suppose from command to command, but it's my understanding from the people who held this position, chief of war plans, all Army colonels—and I think I've interviewed three of them, if not four of them—they suggest that you, in particular, but also General Peay, when you wanted to talk plans, you really didn't talk directly to the admiral on a regular basis. You would often go straight to the chief of war plans.

Zinni: Yes.

Rudd: Such that the chief of war plans really felt that he had a one on one, as a colonel, that he really felt that he had a one-on-one relationship with you and autonomy is too much, too

strong but that he had a certain degree of distance from the admiral when he was talking to you.

Zinni: Certainly not in my time, I had two admirals, Tom Marfiak and John Sigler. They never were put out by that. I mean, they wanted me to have that relationship with him.

Rudd: No but I mean—some people wouldn't anticipate that. Some people would think that if you're talking plans, you're talking to the J5.

Zinni: You have to remember that there's another aspect to the J5 that you didn't account for and that's the theater engagement planning, the strategy, and especially in the Clinton administration that was big time. Remember, the National Security Strategy talked about engagement. The QDR [quadrennial defense review] that came down from Cohen talked about shaping the environment. The TEP, the theater engagement plan at that time, was a big deal and so that J5 not only had delivered plans and the so-called policy that we mentioned, the big effort day to day was the theater engagement planning. There were a series of conferences. We were out in the AOR's [areas of responsibility]. We were working with the State Department, the individual ambassadors and my J5 was on the road a lot in coordinating these things. The day-to-day engagement—because the engagement became more than just military—read the book, *The Mission*—you know, what was happening in that time, and he was consumed by that, too. It wasn't like the J5 was sort of pushed out because he's a Navy admiral. And I've got to tell you, the one thing I liked about the headquarters, and I've got to tell you this wasn't just me, but everybody I had wanted me to deal with, even the action officers directly, let along the chiefs of the different sections. They really wanted the commander. I didn't detect

anybody that wanted to say, “You brief me, then I’ll brief you, then you brief the boss, then he’ll go brief the CINC.”

Allison: Like you were circumventing the chain of command or something.

Zinni: I think it’s critical. Yeah, yeah, I think it’s critical. You know it’s not just the chief of plans. Let’s talk about the O6s—you’ve got to have a direct relationship at that level. You have to have a direct relationship with your chief of plans. You have to have a direct relationship with your contingency planner. My contingency planner was with me. We went up and briefed the strikes and everything else. I should have my three with me. He came up, the colonel that did the contingency planning.

Rudd: Is that normally an Army colonel?

Zinni: Yes, it was an Army colonel that did the contingency plans. On the J2 side, there were, depending on the crisis or the area you were watching, there were O6s in the JIC [joint intelligence center] and elsewhere that you had a direct line to, that the 2 wanted you to have a direct line to; so there’s a level of colonels in there. When the director of our operations center, a colonel . . . when the ops center was up and you had a crisis or crisis action team or something like that, you were dealing with him directly. He was your day-to-day guy, had all the stuff there. So there’s a whole layer of colonels that go completely across the J staff that you’re dealing with day to day. I never had a flag or general officer that ever objected to that or wanted it filtered through them. It’s just too much on their plate. I mean whether you’re the J2, 3, or 5, you can’t have everything filtered. You’re just not around that much and you have so many other things on your plate that you’re working. They briefed their bosses. I mean it’s not that their bosses are kept out of the loop but you can’t wait and you can’t have it go through filters at times. So that direct

relationship was understood by everybody. I never had a sense that there was this sort of stilted hierarchy that we had to go through down there and I don't think any service tried to do that.

Rudd: And I'm not trying to suggest that. What I am suggesting though is, to an outsider who's not familiar with the chemistry on a four-star staff, somebody might assume that you're really going to deal directly with the primary staff officer. In a battalion, the battalion commander usually doesn't go directly to the senior NCO in the 1 shop, he goes to the 1, and when he has the command in staff—that's where the primary staff visit is taken and what I'm trying to capture in this is your perspective and not impose my own.

Zinni: Yes.

Rudd: Is if the chemistry has got much more of a dimension, sort of a . . .

Zinni: But . . . you know . . . it's . . .

Rudd: A spring effect except for you going down one or two levels.

Zinni: But it's not only at that level. Just take I MEF, which I'll say is the same situation at a corps, at I MEF. When we're operating, I've got current ops. This is the guy that's running my ops center. This is the colonel that's running my ops center. I've got future ops. I've got another colonel or lieutenant colonel that's running that which is the next phase of the operation. And then I've got future plans, which is doing the planning for the next mission change. And so, as a commander, they have to have commander's input in every one of those. It doesn't mean the 3 or the 5 is not there with you but they have to interact with you. If they don't get commander's intent in what they're doing at the CINC's level that J5, that chief of plans, when he's submitting, working up the plan to submit it or when it's being adjusted or formed or there [are] lessons coming out of

Internal Look or something like that, he's got to constantly come back to you to make sure he has your intent on that plan. When that plan goes up to the Joint Staff, I will be called up there to brief that plan, and if you're smart . . .

Rudd: And would you normally take him with you?

Zinni: Oh yeah. Now, he would brief it in the tank or my contingency planner would come up and brief—we're going to do a strike on Iraq, he'd brief the strike. The thing you don't want to do is you don't want to brief it yourself, because if you brief it yourself, the trouble with that in the tank is . . .

Rudd: You can't see what's going on in the room.

Zinni: Well, that's one but the other thing is, those around the table will go after that colonel and will speak their minds and will be critical. If you're up there, they won't. Now, you have to decide whether you want them to be critical or not. Now, in my view I wanted them to have at it. I mean if they wanted to, you can preempt the level of criticism by standing up and doing it yourself. One four star is not going to take on another four star, or certainly not in the same way. But if you want the plan to get an honest hearing, you put the colonel up there and you don't let the colonel take abuse, you know, that's not the intent. Everybody understands the game. He goes up there and briefs it and they could say, "Well, wait a minute, what are you doing here? Why do you have . . . "

Rudd: So if it gets out of hand then you get in between?

Zinni: I always get in between. I answer the questions. I mean obviously if it's a little nitnoid question he can answer like how many angels on the head of pin or something he can answer, but if it comes down to I don't understand why we're running this strike package out here, what's the purpose of this? Now you have commander's intent, and so you can

engage in that, but these colonels that I'm talking about are going to go to the tank and stand in front of the Joint Chiefs of Staff and their boss, the CINC, and the secretary of defense and they're going to brief this plan or they're going to brief this, whether it's a contingency plan or a strike option or the J5. I'll tell you one thing I discovered, when I got there as a DCINC, we used to go up and brief and they would get rid of the boiler plate and they would just go right into briefing, okay here's the target list, this is what we're going to do, disaster. And the assumption was these are all big boys. These are all senior people. You don't have to go through this is the analysis of the mission, this is the commander's intent, all of that sort of stuff. I saw this from a DCINC's point of view when I took over. I said, "We're not going to do that anymore. We're going to brief the whole thing. You're going to start by an orientation. You're then going to give them the enemy, just like we do at Basic School. Then you're going to give them how we went through the estimate of the situation and pulled it out. Then you're going to give them the mission as I've laid it out with the commander's intent, with the tasks and everything. Then you're going to . . . " I've got to tell you the first time we went up and did that, actually [General Charles C.] Krulak was up there. He came up to me and he said, "This is what's been missing in these briefs. It's so much easier to understand it when you walk us through that way, don't assume anything." And he said, "You know, we're doing all our other stuff, chief. So we come over here into the tank, we've got a quick action officer brief. You've got to walk us through that sort of thing."

Allison: Get the context.

Zinni: Yes, and I'll tell you we never—this says something about the quality of the colonels, I felt, but this was in the contingency, we never had an issue with that. As a matter of fact,

the praise that those guys got, they used to joke in the tank all the time and they'd say, "Zinni, you're lucky to have this guy. If he got sick on the way up here and you had to brief it, it would be a disaster. Thank God you've got these colonels." But that was true. These were fantastic planners, and so we'd go up on a contingency plan or we'd go up on a debrief-delivered plan and these guys had it nailed. To get there they've got to be in your head. I mean that plan has got to reflect what you see and you've got to understand this goes back to the 2. I mean my 2 in the beginning w[ere] Army two star Bob Noonan and then Keith Alexander, two great intelligence officers. One of the first things that happened when I took over the CINC, I called Bob in and I said, "Bob, answer this question for me." I forget what it was. And he said, "Why?" I said, "What do you mean why?" And he said, "Why are you asking me the question?" And I said, "What do you care?" I mean I'm the CINC, answer the question. He said, "No." I said, "Why not?" He said, "I don't know what you're going to do with it." He said, "Are you going to make a decision? Are you thinking about something? Is this clearing something up in your mind?" He said, "If I answer that specific question with specific information and it's out of context it could actually do you a disservice." He said, "If you give me the context as to why you're asking the question, if there's a decision based on it, then I could give you a better answer." "You may be asking the wrong question." And I said there was intel 101 for me, which I thought was fantastic. And basically what he was saying is, "Hey boss, I've got to be inside your head. If you just shoot me out a bunch of questions . . . " You know what I thought about; I went back to that, that was 1997. What if George Tenet said that to the president? "Why are you asking me the question about WMD?" "Well, I want to use it as a case to go to war." What might Tenet's answer be, you know?

Allison: So what you're saying is the basics that you learned in Basic School still applied even when you're CentCom.

Zinni: Well, we'd make an assumption when we'd go up the line that we don't need to do all that boilerplate. That boilerplate sets the stage. First of all, you have Army, Navy, Air Force, Marine Corps. What are you briefing? You're briefing a NEO [noncombatant evacuation operation] somewhere. You're briefing a strike plan. You're briefing a deliberate plan 1003-98 or whatever or 50-27, the Korean War plan. You've got to walk these guys through it. We had a problem with Desert Fox in that—and this I couldn't believe. The day after the first, the initial attack, the first running of the ATO [air-tasking order] I'm in my office, I've got CNN on because obviously we've got some strike going on, and I see the chairman stand up at a Pentagon press conference and he's got a chart, BDA [bomb damage assessment]. I couldn't believe it. One running of the ATO and he's got the BDA up there. You know what the BDA is when you've got just one run? It's nothing. I mean, bomb damage assessment, you get the initial pilot reports, you check your SigInt [signals intelligence] and all this other stuff. You don't put anything up there. I mean you're very conservative on that BDA, and if you don't understand a BDA, you're not going to be able to interpret it. So for example, there's one running and it says in there that a target you went after you believe you got 3-percent destruction on the target. Well, maybe because that's all you can verify right now. Maybe you believe it's probably more because of the pilot reports or whatever, but that's all you're confirming through a SigInt report, and that's all you're going to take into account now. And maybe you have a plan to restrike that target three times so 3 percent right now, which is probably 25 percent, and will prove out over time where you want to be. But that doesn't

show when you show a percentage. It shows 17 percent of the air defenses destroyed. Well, you've got some damn reporter saying you only destroyed 17 percent? Well, maybe the destruction of the air defense wasn't important. I've got these planes through to hit that target. Here's the air defense. All I need to do is suppress that. If I destroy 17 percent, what do I care? If no planes are damaged or hurt, I hit that target and took it. I don't give a damn; they're irrelevant now. I'll live with 17 percent destruction. It doesn't matter. It was to suppress them and shut them off but if you're not explaining this, then all of a sudden the chairman starts getting hit with these questions. He couldn't answer them, and it looked horrible. Here we have a great operation. The strikes are phenomenal. The pilots and the planners did a great job. It was a disaster. I get called up. "You've got to come up now!" I'm in the middle of this operation. I have to get in a plane and go to the Pentagon and stand up there and brief the BDA because they didn't understand it. First of all, I said to the chairman, "Why are you briefing BDA? And why are you doing it the day after the first strikes went in?" So then I get up. I get the Pentagon press corps and I said, "We're going to go through BDA 101. First of all, BDA in and of itself doesn't mean anything to you unless you understand the commander's intent. That's how you make sense of what you're seeing. Second of all, when you're beginning to see percentages you have to know it's a very conservative interpretation. We probably know it's a lot more than that and we give it a category: destruction, suppression, or whatever. Third of all, some targets it may not matter whether you destroy them. If you effectively neutralize them to some capacity to accomplish something else, you may never see that improve again but that's not important. That's not relevant." I'm explaining this to them and Barbara Star says to me, "That's the first time anybody has given us a BDA lecture."

So part of your job is education if you're going to be public about these things and not leave it to people that don't understand it. No one else could interpret my BDA because they wouldn't know what I was trying to achieve and what my intent is. I mean my inner staff would know but . . .

Rudd: On Goldwater-Nichols, I was just doing a study. There's a book out, it's *[inaudible]* on Goldwater-Nichols, and I was going through the evolution, and I've got a particular interest in this because a lot of people in our business today think that jointness starts with Goldwater-Nichols, and, of course I make an argument it goes back to Yorktown and World War II and the 1947 Defense Act and so forth and Goldwater . . . and my argument is Goldwater-Nichols is a big surge but it didn't start cold there. So what I was trying to do in a study was to get a handle on just what it was to change and is that all good? Because the general perception is that it was all good and there's one stage in the Goldwater-Nichols evolution before the bill is signed where the service chiefs, I think General [P. X.] Kelley is the Marine commandant at the time and so forth, objects. And of course the person that's writing it is pro Goldwater-Nichols, so the nuance of what they're objecting to is somewhat distorted in the text but basically what they're objecting to is if you empower the Joint Staff, if you empower the chairman, and if you empower the secretary of defense to make all these direct advisory notices to the NSC [National Security Council] and the president and so forth you will seriously degrade the experience and the concerns of the service chiefs. And of course what's developed in this particular perspective is . . .

Zinni: I don't agree with any of that.

Rudd: But just one question in that is it possible that Goldwater-Nichols did degrade . . .

Zinni: No.

Rudd: The input of the service chiefs . . .

Zinni: No.

Rudd: And that that may have . . .

Zinni: No.

Rudd: Been a factor . . .

Zinni: No.

Rudd: In, say, Shinseki being marginalized?

Zinni: No, no. Look at the history of the Joint Chiefs before Goldwater-Nichols. Look at Truman. He's got a deal with McArthur out there, who is a rogue. He's got Omar Bradley and the Joint Chiefs, he wanted to create because World War II he has an Army and a Navy fighting each other, McArthur and Nimitz and everything else. The reason he wanted a Joint Chiefs is he wanted somebody that could put it together. He didn't want as the president to be arbitrating fights between the Army and the Navy and, of course, then you had the Air Force and the Marine Corps beginning to come into its own, so then you were doubling his problem. He creates the Joint Chiefs. Tell me what the Joint Chiefs did in the Korean War did to help him out with McArthur. Now tell me, I'll just pull the book, *Dereliction of Duty*, what the Joint Chiefs did in the Vietnam War. There was no Goldwater-Nichols. Is that the voice that was going to be stifled? To me it was stifled, you know? So Goldwater-Nichols wasn't stifling anything. It was actually empowering more voices in uniform in my view. Now you've had a secretary of defense in the last one, in Rumsfeld, that was a pre-Goldwater-Nichols secretary of defense. He did not like Goldwater-Nichols. He wanted to reverse it back to all power in the center and back up

there. I actually think Goldwater-Nichols decentralized the power. As a combatant commander . . .

Rudd: From who to who?

Zinni: Well, first of all, as a combatant commander, I saw the president twice a year. As a combatant commander, I had testimony before Congress, mandatory testimony, twice a year and called frequently in the interim. I mean I've probably testified on average five or six times a year, access to the Congress.

Rudd: Pre-Goldwater-Nichols?

Zinni: Pre-Goldwater-Nichols. Pre-Goldwater-Nichols, I would say the combatant commanders had nothing going for them, I mean their voices were stifled. I mean there was no real voice. Everything went VFR [visual fighting rules] direct. We've come back to the pre-Goldwater-Nichols. I think Rumsfeld damaged the progress Goldwater made. In the Gulf War, who would have testified before Congress in uniform on the Gulf War?

Schwarzkopf, if you wanted to bring the commander back. Schwarzkopf would have.

Now, in the Iraq War, who is testifying now? Who keeps getting called back, now? It's [General] David Petraeus. Where's the CINC? You just had the CINC walk away or get fired because he's complaining about the lack of his voice. And Goldwater-Nichols was in its glory, which I think was under the guys like Cohen. We had a voice. We were listened to. We were ushered into the room. We could speak. Goldwater-Nichols, we have reversed Goldwater-Nichols. I was an action officer at Headquarters Marine Corps then, and General Kelley's big fear and the others chiefs of service was that Goldwater-Nichols, when creating the integrating structure, the joint structure, that it would create in his words a class of mandarins. They saw like any other integration of government, the

NSC or anything else, it would create a separate bureaucracy and the services would lose their clout. The brilliance in Goldwater-Nichols was the integrating agencies belonged to the services. Who mans the joint commands? The services, they send somebody over there for two years, three years, then he or she comes back to the services. And there's a quality requirement on that, so it's good people. To get promoted you have to have your joint tour and that has to be something that's done on promotion. So you are sending quality people to man it, make those decisions, and they come back to you; they are still yours. Goldwater-Nichols had a component from every service in all the joint commands whether it's a JTF [joint task force] temporarily or it's a fixed joint command, like unified command. And so the . . . the brilliance of Goldwater-Nichols is the integrating agencies created a sense of ownership, participation and representation. And so the services' worries and fears never materialized. I disagree that before Goldwater-Nichols, there was true jointness; there wasn't. There was often and on measures of coordination. When Goldwater-Nichols first came in I will tell you that in the first part, in maybe the mid-80s, the late '80s, I would say it was deconfliction, because the trust and the confidence wasn't there. We were trying to deconflict. Believe me, you went to war over issues like air control and all that, which are not issues anymore. Deconfliction is we gain trust and confidence and we started to build up a bank of operations and learned to work together, went to true coordination, and then true coordination about the time I was leaving—I thought we were entering the true goal of integration where you began to not even look at a uniform. When I was at I MEF when we would get the JTF mission like Somalia and other places, when we put on our JTF hat, we would do a mission analysis and a list of tasks, specified, implied. Then next to them I always had them write the

capabilities met at the fill-in. It had nothing to do with services or forces—capabilities, and then after that we would list from all services the kinds of forces that could fulfill that capability. And then what we looked at in the end is which is the best and which forces if we use them can do multiple tasks. Then you get an efficiency and that's how we generated the JTF. You could have never done that before Goldwater-Nichols. You couldn't have done it at the beginning of Goldwater-Nichols.

Rudd: What broke [it]?

Zinni: Rumsfeld, he didn't like Goldwater-Nichols. His view of Goldwater-Nichols is it defused power too much. The power had to be centralized. Look, he took away power from the uniformed military. It all was on his staff. It was the merry band of Wolfowitz and Feith and [Stephen] Cambone and all that crowd up there. They were making decisions on troop numbers. Bill Cohen would have never told me how many troops. I mean if there was an issue, if he looked at the troop numbers and they seemed out of line, he would have asked the chairman and the Joint Chiefs to take a look at that if he couldn't fill them in the JSCAP or something; he might have questioned but he would have never, ever had his staff, Walt Slocombe or John Hamre, deciding troop numbers and deployments and how they're going to phase in and that sort of thing. I mean it's ridiculous.

Rudd: Is it possible that what took place, functionally, is that OSD got empowered at the expense of the Joint Staff?

Zinni: Absolutely, not the Joint Staff, the joint structure. In my view, the Joint Chiefs of Staff is a dysfunctional organization and always has been. It's not to say there haven't been good people there, believe me, and it's not to say when those people are wearing their Title 10 hats, they haven't done a good job; they have, but look, write the history of the Joint

Staff, Korean War, Vietnam War, Gulf War, the current war, and tell me about the performance of the Joint Staff. In the Korean War, they let Truman down. In Vietnam we had dereliction of duty. In the Gulf War, one of them got relieved. They were almost irrelevant. I mean Schwarzkopf was VFR direct. In this damn war, God we've had two chairmen that probably should have been fired and the Joint Chiefs, the secretary of defense never even met with him. Two members of the Joint Chiefs told me there was no meeting for the beginning of the war right up until almost the last days of . . .

Rudd: You've been somewhat harsh with the general officers since 2003, and I'm not going to ask you for any names. I would like to surface one name and that's Lieutenant General [Gregory S.] Newbold, who did resign, and he has talked to a small group of our students on several occasions about that and I don't know if he discussed this with you or what's your relationship with him. He was certainly in Somalia, so you must know him . . .

Zinni: I know him very well, yes.

Rudd: . . . several times over. He resigns but not in protest in a way that anybody seems to acknowledge it at the time. He resigns quietly. What's your interpretation of that in terms of somebody that was discontent with the system?

Zinni: I mean I know Greg very well. I know he was dissatisfied and frustrated. I don't know the details. I mean I really have no true insights into that. I know his feelings about that particular Pentagon administration and how he felt it was being run, but again, I can't speak for him. I will be honest, completely honest with you; I was disappointed in the leadership in the military in this. Take away the issue of whether we should have gone into Iraq or not; that's probably a political issue. I happen to feel, again, it's the wrong war, wrong place, wrong time. But let's say there's somebody who [was] there [was] a

uniformed four star who feels it was the appropriate thing to do. We can argue that and debate it on political grounds on whether it was there and on the intelligence and go back and forth, and I would never question someone's belief, but, and this is the big but, you can't tell me the conduct of this war, that either we have people who are exceptionally incompetent in that they didn't look at troop numbers and requirements, or they cowed for some reason. That's what really makes me angry. Secondly, if you were—if I would have gone let's say to the Joint Staff or Joint Chiefs in some way and I saw that we were about to throw away everything that General Peay and General Hoar had done, if I looked at troop numbers, the planning, the assumptions and everything else and I was totally dismissing them, I would have at least said, "Wait a minute. These are not dumb guys. They've invested a lot in this." CentCom is not a chump staff down there, the kinds of people that do the planning in the chiefs of plans. If we're going to throw this out totally, we ought to know what we're doing. Did anybody go back and ask any of us. When you hear Schwarzkopf, who is probably the mildest, because he's supportive, he voiced deep concern about this. General Hoar was very vocal about this war and the conduct. General Peay was too, got himself in a little trouble down in Richmond when he did it. And, of course, I was probably the most vocal of all. But if you have the last four combatant commanders telling you what you are about to do is screwed up, don't you think the chairman or the Joint Chiefs would say, "Wait a minute!" Don't we need to look at this? And why did General Franks have a plan that he was invested in three years as the JFLCC and another three years as the CINC, six years this plan was his, either as the ground component commander or as the combatant commander, and then all of a sudden it's no good?

Rudd: How do you account for that?

Zinni: I don't. I don't know. I don't know. So if you wanted to, this is the question that has to be asked of the two chairmen during this period of time, of the Joint Chiefs during this period of time. I mean, it's easy for a retired guy to speak out. It's harder for them. I mean for a lot of reasons. This is what's buzzing in the ears of the young officers. I just talked about this at the Naval Academy. I talked about this at the Army War College. I talked about this at the National War College all in the last three weeks. It's the buzz in Leavenworth ever since. Who was it Lieutenant Colonel [Paul] Yingling's letter questioned general . . .

Rudd: How do you feel about his letter?

Zinni: It's resonating. It doesn't matter how I feel about it. If his colleagues dismissed this and said this guy's out to lunch—what's disturbing to me is his compadres out there are saying, "Yes, this guy speaks for all of us. Where's our generals?" And so somebody's got to answer that question. This came after my time. It's not for me to answer. I gave my voice to this. I have no way of respecting someone who chose to go along with it because they had some reason to go along with that, they felt, "Hey, maybe I don't agree with it but I'll just be replaced by somebody else that doesn't understand the concerns; I'm better positioned to at least deal with them. I can't leave my troops at this moment. I'm just going to throw my stars on the table would be fine, but at this point is that the best thing I can do for my troops and my country?" That's an individual decision and it's hard to speak for somebody in active duty. It's easy when you're retired to say throw them on the table. You're gone, you're collecting your pension and I would never speak for them but I'm saying, there has to be some accountability because that book is going to be

rewritten. Chapter two is going to be on this war and these Joint Chiefs are going to have to answer for that, along with the combatant commanders that were part and parcel of this.

Allison: What do you say to people that say that this is a violation of the separation of the civil and military powers.

Zinni: Bulls——t! The military has certain responsibilities. Look, it's clear to me. I mean, I had General Shelton explain this to me after he retired. There's certain things that belong to the uniformed military. You know, we don't appoint political generals like we do political ambassadors. And so if somebody walks in, in a civilian suit with no military experience, and assumes the role of the general and starts to decide the troop numbers, in other words, what they did is they took 1003-98 and threw it out. And said we know better, us civilians, and now we're going to do away with all of your assumptions, all your planning parameters, all everything else because it's all the stale BS. We know better. Based on what, do you know better? And then say here's the plan. And then to say that that is flawed; you're going to get good Americans killed, you're going to waste our treasury, you're going to alienate the world against us, you're going to create a disaster that'll be a long time in fixing it. This wasn't said after that, it was said before that, and that's in my mind, a responsibility of the uniform. If we're all just going to salute smartly and execute every charge of the light brigade, then what the hell kind of officers are we making? What kind of responsible citizens are we making? I mean we've got to answer that question. It doesn't mean you defy. You have one choice when the order is issued. You have two choices, execute or get out. That's civilian leadership. That's how you

respect civilian leadership. There's no third alternative. There's no McArthur single alternative. They were wrong.

We'd better have a clear understanding of this or we're going to continue to repeat this every time a group of dilettantes takes over and hides behind this civilian leadership and decides to get in war planning. You know, Hugh Shelton said it best to me; there are certain things that the senior uniformed military are responsible for under our Constitution, to our country, to the secretary of defense, to the president, to the Congress, to the American people, and you have a responsibility to fulfill that. And in my mind these were our responsibilities that were being taken away from them, and we weren't standing up to that. It doesn't mean you're defying civilian leadership. Rick Shinseki wasn't defying civilian leadership; he was actually complying with the rules of confirmation. Why do you think the Senate has to confirm us? Because they're the voice of the people and they have to hear . . . the first thing Strom Thurmond said to me when I went over for my nomination to CentCom was "General Zinni, stand up, raise your right hand. If you are called before this body, do you swear that you will give us your honest opinion even if it is in opposition of the administration policy?" Yes, I do or you're not going to get confirmed. It's your obligation. You're not violating civilian control or you're not disloyal if you go to the Congress and you give your honest views on this. Shinseki was the only one that did it, and he got creamed for it and nobody protected him. [After a short break] We've been through Somalia. We'd been through Provide Comfort and the Kurds. We'd been through Haiti. We'd been through Bosnia. Phase IV is the military's problem. More often than not they're the "stuckees." Second, if that was the case and they were off the hook, where are they now saying I was told it wasn't my

problem? Where are they now standing up saying, “Look, we got screwed here. The military was conned?” I don’t hear their voices. I mean I’ve got two problems with it and so I ask you the question again, who is defending this? I read these apologetic books, Feith and [Lewis Paul] Bremer, George Tenet, and all, I mean they’re ridiculous. The truth isn’t even out there. There’s no outrage. Over 4,000 dead troops are maimed and killed and how many billions of dollars a day? There’s no outrage to this, the mess we’ve made in Iraq, what we’ve done in the region, our image around the world, the anti-American . . . I mean everything that’s been created and, I’m the bad guy. I’m the bad guy. Not that I give a s——t but I’m the bad guy, you know . . .

Rudd: I don’t know, I don’t think anybody is in a position to make a substantive criticism. I mean you did speak out. The big unknown is why more people didn’t and . . .

Zinni: Yes.

Rudd: And you weren’t the only one, but I think you were in the best position to speak out. But the down side is the fact that you spoke out, the fact that you had been marginalized, even to me, and I was very uninformed but when I was at that Erskine lecture, I said something is up because you’ve got the wrong audience for this message. The message you’ve got is up; it’s not down and it was the first time the bells were ringing for me in that you’ve got a message and you can’t get it out.

Zinni: Look, that audience, in my mind I didn’t have any other audience, but that audience needed to understand what they were getting into. I was down at Camp Lejeune at that same time I had this book tour going on. MCA had me down there even though the book had nothing to do with it. That was with the issues. And you were talking about a bunch of people gone off there—first of all, General [Henry P.] Osman and General [James T.]

Conway and all asked me to talk to their staffs and I talked to them about this. One of the things Gen[eral] Conway . . .

Rudd: This is in California?

Zinni: In California with General Conway and with Pete Osman down in Camp Lejeune, II MEF.

Remember Pete was going up north with the Kurds and all but their forces were all going there and I'm giving them this stuff and they're looking at me like I'm a three-headed monster, you know? How could—what are you talking about? I mean are you crazy? I mean this is all good stuff, we're going off to war; that's what we're all about you know, Jim Conway, after I gave him my best shot. I gave II MEF and I MEF all the best advice I could in all this. Conway's last question to me before he left, he says, "Sir, we're leaving." He says, "Any last bit of advice before I go." I said, "Jim, when the civil war starts, whose side are you going to be on?" He says, "You're kidding. You really think there's going to be a civil war?"

Rudd: You mean a civil war in Iraq?

Zinni: Yes. I said, "Yeah, there's going to be Sunni on Shia, and it's going to come right away.

They've done nothing to prevent this. They're actually going to exacerbate it and whose side are you going to be on?" I mean if you could see it, why couldn't anybody else see it? I didn't see it because I'm prescient or exceptionally knowledgeable. I'm the product of my intelligence and my own planning and the input from a lot of other people, going back to that Desert Crossing. I was learning about Phase IV from State Department, from all the intelligence agencies, from everybody else. I mean something's wrong. Either you have one or two problems. Either you have people that for some sort of misguided loyalty or careerism or whatever knew better but elected to ignore it, or they didn't know better.

Now, if the second, these are honorable men who honestly thought this was all okay, we could do this and everything else, then you have a serious question about competence. Then you have a serious question that this institution, the Marine Corps University, the war colleges, everybody else had better start thinking about. The Joint Forces Command and all their contractors, General Luck and everybody else went down to CentCom with all the brilliant ideas coming out of there, rapid decisive operations, knowledge-based, effects-based, all this stuff that Van Riper and I since we retired were telling them was full of crap, they went down there with all of this stuff . . .

Rudd: Would you add strategic operational design to that or is that something that you're . . .

Zinni: Network centric . . .

Rudd: No, no . . .

Zinni: Pick your three words, you know. Van Riper and I have three columns of words, sometimes we just mix three up and tell them it's a new theory, and they love it. And it's all BS you know? But they went down there with all this brilliance to work with Frank's staff so here was the brilliance of the Joint Forces Command and all their work, millions and millions and millions of dollars went into this, all this gaming and everything else. They went down there to give them the latest and greatest thinking. They went off with that and it was a disaster. All the great uniformed minds that supported this from the get-go, all the academic institutions in the military, all the leadership in Washington and elsewhere accepted this.

Allison: This was building the new war plan, right sir?

Zinni: Well, I mean everything. It's not just the issue of the war planning. It's an issue of the situation on the ground. Look, there were two major theaters of war. One was Iraq and

one was Korea. If there's anything you should have known about, it's Iraq and Korea. It's not like, oh s——t, where did Iraq come from? It's not like we were invading Brazil or someplace. Neither one of these is good but you tell me if there's a third alternative. Either they drank the Kool-Aid, which is bad enough, then it's a question of honor and character, or they didn't understand this and didn't know what was going to happen and didn't have their war fighting capability, their knowledge of the situation and the culture down. You've got either a question of competence or honor, and you tell me if there's a third alternative because I don't see it as anything other than either of those. And if it's one of those or both of those, we have got a serious problem we had better correct. And this is what our young officers are talking about now from the middies and cadets all the way up to the colonels in the war college, the lieutenant colonels in the war college; they've lost faith and so the general officers, the five officers had better get it together. It's long past my doing. I gained nothing from this. This has all been negative as far as I'm concerned. I mean I got my share of hate mail and condemned and everything else over this, and there was nothing to be gained. I didn't choose to be a television analyst or something on this but somebody's got to answer for this. Don't wait till one of those young majors writes that second *Dereliction of Duty* that's up there on the bookshelf. That's going to be the legacy of this leadership. But what bothers me is if the questions aren't answered now, they're going to be answered in a couple of years by that *Dereliction of Duty* or by guys like you that are writing about this.

Rudd: Give me 10 names if you can think of that many of people that should be sitting right there for an interview like this.

Zinni: Well, I think that you have the combatant commanders, the last three.

Rudd: So Franks?

Zinni: Well, Franks, [General John] Abizaid, and I guess [William J.] Fallon . . .

Allison: Casey?

Zinni: Well in . . . then you have [General Ricardo] Sanchez and [General George W.] Casey.

Then you have the two chairmen, Myers and Pace. Then the other chiefs of the Joint Chiefs, to me that's the senior leadership. Look, let's be positive about this. I would think they would want to explain where they came from. I mean do they want this to be their legacy? Are they going to wait until that book's written by some young major? I don't know. I know every one of these people fairly well, and personally, and the last thing I would wish on them is some sort of taint to the service they gave to their country.

They've got to answer it though. You've got to answer it. I mean, if, on my watch, there was a question that either fell to my competence or my honor, I'd have to answer it. You don't run history to brand you as a careerist or an incompetent. And so what's your story going to be? Hey, I was a good soldier. I saluted, took a step backward and executed, if that's the best you've got, that's the best you've got. I don't know.

Allison: What do you feel about there seems to be recent cause for optimism in Iraq with the surge and stuff?

Zinni: Did you turn on the news this morning?

Allison: No, sir.

Zinni: You should have and then you tell me about optimism. The Shia just attacked the U.S. and Iraqi forces in Baghdad. You know, a massive coordinated attack . . .

Rudd: Massive?

Zinni: Yes, supposedly at last count we had killed 38 of them. They didn't say anything about Iraqi and U.S. casualties on it. This is like saying—yesterday, we had 500 people that were poisoned from bad water. Today, there's only 300; so it's looking up. What's good there? The SIGIR—the Special Inspector General for Iraq Reconstruction—the SIGIR just released a report about all the projects that were overfunded, incomplete, all the reconstruction disaster. It just came out today. I mean that's another big disaster. You've got the Shia ready to go into civil war. We never disarmed Sadr and it's his people that we are now fighting. Basra is a mess. The Brits blew smoke up everybody's skirts about how wonderful COIN [counterinsurgency] guys they were. I just got a lieutenant colonel that sent me an email who's down in Basra for when they went down to try to clean it out, what a disaster the Iraqi forces were down there and here six years later they can't even fight, 1,300 defections, the Shia split, Iranian influence in there blowing us up with their equipment, another report just out. The Sunni opting out because we're paying them off. What happens when we stop paying them? We're dumping money on them fast and furious.

You know, the Kurds basically setting up their own state out there and not careful how they handle PKK [Kurdistan Peoples' Party], the Turks are going to come down and hammer the s——t out of them. The Maliki government, which is about a useless organization as you could find, can't even distribute oil while corruption is rampant amongst their—the Iranian influence is unbelievable. And this is the good news, this is better than it's ever been in six years. This part of the world, I spent the last 20 years in this and I've got a vested interest, and I want to see this place stabilized and I don't believe we can leave it now that it's a mess. It's important. I don't want my son to have

to go back and have to do this again, over and over again. And I also think we're getting distracted from elsewhere in the world. I think the real fight's going to be in Pakistan and Afghanistan again and, but you know, we're starting to put lipstick on a pig here, you know?

Rudd: You mentioned talking to General Conway before you left. There's an account, I think I've read it so I've probably got a source, but I'd just like to get your spin on it where apparently you go out to California and I think it's in a hotel. You talk to a bunch of the leaders, maybe battalion commander up in I MEF, and you allegedly say something to the effect, you're going to win in terms of beating them, and we'll be disappointed in you if you don't or words to that effect.

Zinni: Yes, I told Jim Mattis that. I told him I would disown him if he didn't own Baghdad in three weeks.

RUDD: About what month was that? That had to be one of the first three months in '03?

Zinni: Yes, I don't know exactly when but it was just not too long before they left.

Rudd: It was after Christmas.

Zinni: Yes, oh yeah—I said I'd disown you if you don't . . .

Rudd: Was that in a hotel?

Zinni: Yes, I think so. I forget where it was.

Rudd: And in the room, I assume like some sort of hotel conference room or something or . . .

Zinni: Yes, I think so. I don't remember.

Rudd: And battalion commander up?

Zinni: Yes, it was a pretty good size group there. I imagine it was battalion commanders and up.

Rudd: What I recall from reading this account, I think I read it, maybe somebody told me, was after you said that you said it's what comes after . . .

Zinni: Yes.

Rudd: Could you put that in your words rather than my words?

Zinni: Yes, I told him, I said, "You're not going to have any problems taking down the Republican Guard and the regime." I said, as a matter of fact, I said to Jim, "I'll disown you if you don't do it in less than three weeks." And they all laughed. I said, "That's not your problem. Your problem is what comes after." The mess that comes after . . .

Rudd: Do you think they got it when you said that?

Zinni: I think they were shocked by it. I don't think they knew whether I knew what I was talking—I shouldn't say it that way. I don't think they were convinced in their own mind that I was right. I think it was, wait a minute, somebody else is going to do this. I talked to General [John F.] Kelly who was the assistant division commander I think at the time and I asked him, I said, "John, what was your impression about Phase IV? Who was going to do that?" He said, "You know, we were honestly led to believe that when we did our part, take down the regime and all, that we would turn behind me and over the berm would be coming the Phase IV force." Let me ask you a question because a reporter told me this, that ORHA [Office for Reconstruction and Humanitarian Assistance] got lost on its way from Kuwait up to Baghdad and actually had to ask this reporter with a GPS to figure out where they were.

Rudd: I can elaborate on that . . .

Zinni: You don't have to answer it but that probably says it all.

Rudd: No, no, it was a bit of a fiasco within ORHA. We were full of military people and ex-military people and so forth, and at the last minute we couldn't get maps. Now, I flew up with General [Jay M.] Garner so I experienced this on a subsequent trip. I drove down with somebody and then I was going back up and I was trying to hitch a ride before I found out, as a civilian—I'm retired military—but as a civilian, I suddenly found myself in charge of a five-vehicle convoy with one M16 and three pistols and a whole bunch of civilians from the Army Corps of Engineer driving up, and we did make our habitual wrong turn between Basra and Nasiriyah. Just about every convoy going up did and it's . . . you could get me going on it. It was inexcusable, and it was just the nature . . .

Zinni: It's not inexcusable for those of you that were out there. You wanted to do the right thing and, God bless you for your service and wanting to be there. I love Jay Garner. As a matter of fact, I just talked to him a couple of—two weeks ago. But when you saw ORHA, you knew ORHA wasn't going to reconstruct Iraq. Give me a break. You know? I mean what are we thinking? When you're listening to these neocon idiots talking about flowers in the streets and cakewalk, it's going to be a cakewalk, based on what do they . . .

Rudd: ORHA wasn't the neocons. It was a bunch of people thrown together.

Zinni: Yes..

Rudd: Trying to do the best they could . . .

Zinni: Sure.

Rudd: And changing rules, I mean when ORHA morphs into CPA [Coalition Provisional Authority], it wasn't two separate organizations then. Bremer came in and changed all the rules.

Zinni: The stories are rampant that . . . I have friends that were on the CPA too, told me stories.

Some Brit walks in, paid his own way there, just a guy that wanted to do well, didn't have any expertise in anything, put him in charge of the Oil Ministry—support. This was told to me by a retired two-star admiral who was their budgeting guy and all. These things are horrible and to me, I want to go back to competence. I mean for 39 years I really believed that. As a matter of fact, I'm writing a book on leadership now, and I teach a course at Duke, and I always have said, and this was burned into my soul from Vietnam, "The number one leadership trait, take all these core values stuff and ditch it. The number one core value, the number one core leadership trait is competence." I have this little thing I do with my students at Duke. I say, "All right class; give me your view as to the one leadership trait that's most important." And they start out by, "Oh, compassion for others . . . honor . . ." I mean all this wonderful stuff, all this good stuff, all the stuff you can read on a Wheaties box or something, and then I said, "Okay. Stop. Now, you're in an extremis situation, you're in a firefight; you're surrounded." You don't know if you're going to survive—or I give them a civilian situation. Now you're looking at that leader. What's the number one? Oh, he's got to know his s—t. He's got to be competent. I used to run a leadership training, NCO training course at Camp Lejune, and I had all these young corporals and sergeants coming back from Vietnam. And I did a survey when they first came in there and I said, "Tell me the number one trait you wanted in your lieutenant." Ninety-eight percent said, "He'd better know his stuff." They didn't use stuff but—he'd better know his stuff. He'd better be competent. He'd better have his stuff together so there's no excuse for that. You can't tell me the sun was in my eyes, the glove was too tight, couldn't catch the ball, oh the civilians told me to do this, what was I

to do? We were all good people trying to do the right thing. That sounds like [McNamara]. Read [Robert] McNamara's book: we were working hard and, you know—we—didn't know what we were doing—kind of stuff happens—58,000 dead, God knows how many wounded in more ways than one. I mean we can't tolerate that. We cannot as an institution tolerate that. This whole place is about not tolerating that, the Marine Corps University. You know, what are we doing to look back on why we didn't see this. This isn't just lessons learned. It isn't just a bunch of angry civilians like Tom Ricks and others that are going to write books about the fiasco. Where is the internal soul searching about what went wrong? Why did our senior officers see it this way? Why did our midgrade and junior officers even go off and not You asked me about the reaction in that room? They looked at me like I was a martian. What are you talking about? You know our leadership, our country couldn't be making this decision the way you're describing it so badly; that's impossible. It's interesting about how many requests I get to talk now as opposed to maybe then. I mean there were certain institutions—I'll say this for our academic institutions in the military, they want you to talk about [this]. You always get invited to the war colleges and command and staff colleges. You didn't get invited to Joint Forces Command or the commands or anyplace else. Even in the Marine Corps commands they wanted to keep a distance.

Rudd: Nobody ever said we couldn't invite you. I've been here for 12 years . . .

Zinni: Not here . . . not here, not at Quantico; it's just the opposite at Quantico.

Rudd: The only time anything came up is one commandant who had made a comment, and it had been dr[agged] out of him about women in the Marine Corps, said something that might have worked on his tour but he was long retired then and he was the only guy—I

got permission to bring him back. So nobody here has ever stiff-armed us about asking somebody like you or somebody . . .

Zinni: Oh, no, no, no.

Rudd: But sometimes our timing hasn't been ideal.

Zinni: Yes.

Rudd: Maybe when we should have brought somebody in, think to invite them. But I don't think anybody here has said, "No, you'd better not have him here. He's too hot to handle."

Zinni: Well, I mean not only was it not here but, like I said, I MEF and II MEF wanted me down there.

Allison: That's interesting.

Zinni: General Conway, General Osman, they all wanted me . . .

Rudd: But the . . . but the cut is at the four-star commands . . .

Zinni: Oh yeah. Absolutely.

Rudd: And is it your view that they just didn't need you around to needle them? Or because they were told not to have you?

Zinni: Well, I think both. No one wanted to be seen with you. But I get a call from Bob Zellick when he was . . . when he was deputy secretary of state, he said, "Can you come over and spend some time with me?" We were up on the seventh floor and we sat down, just he and I in a room, and he says, "You know . . . " He said . . .

Rudd: Seventh floor of what building?

Zinni: State Department. And he said, "I don't know, we know each other but not really well." He said, "I don't know you but you seem really emotional about all this"—and he said, "I want to understand." And we had a conversation for several hours.

Rudd: That would be fairly recently; he's only been . . .

Zinni: No, this is when he was . . . now he's with the World Bank but this was when he was . . .
when Rice first went over he was the deputy secretary of State.

Rudd: How did he respond?

Zinni: He took it all in. He listened very carefully. He took it all in. He didn't argue or anything else but he wanted to understand it. You know it was interesting at Congress, at first it was the Democrats, the most liberal Democrats wanted you to come down and talk to them. Even when they were thinking of voting on the war, then it was the moderates, moderate Democrats, moderate Republicans. Now it's the conservatives . . .

Allison: They want you to go and talk to them?

Zinni: Yes, you know? And talk bad about the administration and everything else but they wanted to talk about what went wrong.

Rudd: Did you get to talk to them before the war vote? Any of them?

Zinni: Yes. I testified for the Senate Foreign Relations Committee but the Democratic Congress wanted to talk to me, I mean caucus, wanted to talk to me too about it when they were agonizing over the vote.

Rudd: Did you talk to them?

Zinni: Yes.

Rudd: What did you say?

Zinni: I gave them my opinion. I said, for what it's worth, this is who I am, this is my experience, this is what I know is fact, this is my opinion; I always separate the two, you know, about this war. This is what I know in terms of the intelligence. This is what I know in terms of the planning. This is what I believe will happen if you do this.

Allison: I've got a copy of his testimony that he gave in about . . . when was that? You were still at CentCom, I believe.

Rudd: No.

Zinni: Senate Foreign Relations.

Allison: February of '03.

Zinni: That was a month before the war . . . three weeks before the war.

Allison: That's right and you pretty clearly come out against it.

Rudd: But the vote was in October, the war vote, wasn't it?

Zinni: Yes—no I'm talking about the testimony at the Senate Foreign Relations committee.

Rudd: Okay.

Zinni: The Democratic caucus was right before the vote. It was the week before the vote.

Rudd: Then it should have been late September or early October?

Zinni: Early October.

Rudd: How many people were in that? Did they all show?

Zinni: Thirty.

Rudd: Thirty—20—as I recall 23 people voted against in the Senate.

Zinni: This wasn't . . . this was congressmen and senators mixed.

Rudd: So on . . .

Zinni: Actually John Murtha asked me to come up and speak to them just to give my views. I did that for about every other week.

Rudd: Was it a dialogue? Was it a presentation?

Zinni: Well, they asked me to give my views and there was Q&A back and forth.

Rudd: How long?

Zinni: Oh, a couple of hours, they were deeply concerned. In their gut they just didn't feel this was right but then as we were sitting there—one of them stood up and said that they just found out that [Tom] Daschle and [Richard] Gephardt had gone over to the White House to demonstrate their support for the president and they basically said it's over—I mean it's over, you know, the leadership goes off and . . .

Rudd: Did they give you pushback on your views?

Zinni: They had a lot of questions. I wouldn't say it was pushback but they had a lot of questions. They just didn't have a base of knowledge or understanding. And then there were others, I mean, like, Walter Jones who is a very conservative Republican, his district is North Carolina—Fort Bragg. You talk about an epiphany. He went to every one of the funerals down there and, then . . . his daughter gave him *Fiasco* to read. He called me up and he said, "General? *Fiasco*, is it right?" And I said, "Yes, pretty much." He said, "I can't believe it. You can't tell me this is right." I said, "Congressman, I can tell you that factually from what I know of this stuff it's absolutely right." I mean there are pieces obviously I wasn't a part of but I can tell you . . . and he just became, you know, adamant that this administration has really screwed up and he became bitter about it.

Allison: Do you think they were overly idealistic, this administration? Saying that they were going to do something like that and really fix the Middle East and . . .

Zinni: Look, in my mind, I've got to say you've got to go back to 9/11. [It] was a shock, a traumatic shock for everybody. You know, the administration is hit suddenly. I mean the last thing they were thinking about was going to war, and I think this president thought he'd be doing other things with the economy or whatever. All of a sudden he finds himself under attack, this traumatic attack; it's unbelievable. Nobody knew at that

moment what was going . . . you know. It could have been the White House or the Capitol had that plane from Pennsylvania not come down. Were there going to be more planes? This big shock, how did this happen? Our guard was let down. All of a sudden there are . . . it looks like our intelligence apparatus is shaky, is not coordinated, has missed these sorts of things . . . what's next? As he's trying to understand this, he realizes this extremism is deeply rooted throughout the Muslim world. I mean, you can go out there and attack al-Qaeda, but this is a problem that we could have for a while and . . . he's trying to figure out what to do besides just the obvious of going in there and fighting them, and of course you're listening to anything and to the credit of the neocons, they had a strategy.

Ever since the mid-90s and they started, you know, blowing in his ear and saying, "Look, you can change everything. You can . . . " And the president, rightly or wrongly, you've got to admire him for this, he believes democracy is something innately rooted in every individual, it's just there to be unleashed and if you let it out . . . and democracy is the solution to everything; it will resolve all the problems in the world. I think it's overidealistic, but he feels strongly about it. And they were presenting a case where you get rid of a bad guy. He knew damn well he was a bad guy. You get rid of a terrible authoritarian regime. You free the people. His belief that innately they will seek a positive liberation and freedom to self-govern and this thing could be a model and spread throughout the Middle East and change the whole dynamics on a strategic level.

Allison: Very idealistic.

Zinni: Yes, and, you know, it would have crushed me had he called me and said, "Tell me why this is wrong?" And having to tell him why it's wrong . . . I mean, I've got to tell you

about the reality I see Mr. President. This is too, too idealistic. It's not going to work that way. And by the way, if you're going to take this on, it isn't going to be a liberation. It's going to be a messy occupation. We need a lot of troops in there for a long time, you know. This isn't Japan and Germany and it's going to be terrible what you're going to have to go through, but if you do this, this is the way you've got to do it.

Allison: During your time at CentCom, the terrorists, al-Qaeda and the other terrorist networks, how much of a threat at that time did you consider them?

Zinni: In 1998, Osama bin Laden issued a series of fatwa and if you know, if you understand how al-Qaeda works . . . and how he works, he adheres to always announcing beforehand what he's going to do. You just have to read it carefully because it's done in such vague, a vague, nuanced way. He made an issue in one announcement that no longer were American military the target. Now open game on all Americans, civilians included. Later on he issued another fatwa that they were entitled to the Islamic bomb—he issued these fatwas and I think '98 was his watershed, was his coming out party.

I think he then believed that he had created a network of relationships with extremist groups and others around the world and had the sanctuary and built up enough in terms of logistics and resources and everything else that he was now going to go regional. And conduct regional attacks, so we saw the embassies in Dar es Salam and Nairobi attacked. By the way, six months before that, I sent a message to the State Department that the one in Nairobi was going to be bombed. They gave me a thank you for your interest in national security, you know, but that's our business. But I had troops in there and it got bombed because it was most vulnerable. And then we had the [USS] *Cole* bombing after I left. They had the USS *Cole* bombing, and I think he was then

prepping for his global reach. The best description of this I ever heard was from General [Peter] Schoomaker, you know, chief of staff of the Army and head of SOCom [Special Operations Command], he said that the embassy bombings and the *Cole* were his cruise missiles and the 9/11 attacks were his ICBM [intercontinental ballistic missile]. I mean that was . . . and if you watched him grow, you saw him grow in that time. I think by the time I left in 2000, he was definitely established as a regional threat and probably at that time because up until that time, Iraq was the greatest threat. Decline of Iraq, I'd say by 2000, al-Qaeda had surpassed Iraq as the major threat in the region.

Allison: Were you sort of aware of it at that time or was that something that you . . .

Zinni: I'll be honest with you; I didn't think he had the capability to strike here. I mean he could have always thrown the odd bomb or shot but to do what he did? I thought our intelligence was too good, domestically, and our controls and security were too good. I was more worried about regional threats. I thought his ability to cause problems in the region were great. The term I use in my testimony is that he was stalking us. And all we had to do was to make one mistake or set one pattern that we were unaware of and we were going to get nailed. And unfortunately, the USS *Cole* was it. I mean three months after I left it got hit in Yemen.

Allison: And you kind of got called on the carpet for that?

Zinni: Well, yes, the chief of Naval Operations said it was my fault because I was the one that wanted to improve relationships with Yemen, that's why the ship went in there. It was the Navy that came to me and said they wanted to go into Aden. You know and they gave me no option because they didn't like any of the ports around the [inaudible]. They were in Djibouti but they didn't like it because the security there was crappy. The Eritreans and

Ethiopians were at war. Djibouti had sided with one side and there were threats—bombing, there were too many small boats in there and they knew small boats and swimmers were the biggest threat. They couldn't go into Jiddah. They couldn't go all the way down to Mombasa. They wouldn't allow their ships to go below 51 percent fuel, so you couldn't get them around to the Gulf, and they were the ones that came to me and said Aden is the place we want to go because you don't have to tie up to a pier to refuel what's on the other side. We can refuel with a line and a camel. We don't have to tie up pierside. I said, "Okay. Fine." I went down there and looked at the port, checked it with the security. They assured me they understood the security and what the threat was. We refueled 28 ships while I was there. There were times when the security threat heightened and I wouldn't let the ships go it. They went in. They had s—ty small boat procedures and everything, got it blown up, and the chief of Naval Operations said, "Well, the reason we were in there is because Zinni wanted to build relations with the Yemis," which was bulls—t.

Rudd: Which chief was that?

Zinni: [Vern] Clark. Now, I took the heat. I went up there. And [Senator John W.] Warner, who was chairman of the Armed Services Committee, gave me a call and said they won't send anybody over to testify. They refused to send the CNO or General Franks; no one will come over. He said, "I've got to ask you. The American people got to know what happened." So I went over and took the heat, three hours under those heat lights getting beat up, you know? I gave them my version. I didn't blame anybody. I said, "I'm the CINC. I made the decision." You know? And I said, "The only thing I will assure you is

the decision was not made on improving relations based on an operational requirement.” I didn’t say that the Navy wanted—[that] it was their request.

Rudd: Do you recall what year, what month that was?

Zinni: Two-thousand of October.

Allison: Yes, the *Cole* was October 2000.

Rudd: And you’d retired just that summer?

Zinni: Yes, I retired in August.

Rudd: So you were in civilian clothes when you went before the committee.

Zinni: Yes. To General Franks’ credit he was told he couldn’t testify, later on he was called to testify and he said, “Look, I may not have made the decision to refuel in Yemen, that was my predecessor.” But he said, “It happened on my watch.” And he said, “And I’ve got to tell you, I would’ve done the same thing General Zinni did based on operational requirements and everything.” He said the same thing.

Allison: I’d like to ask you a Marine Corps-specific question. As your role as the commander of CentCom, what did the Marine Corps need to do to better support your efforts in that AOR?

Zinni: Well, I had an issue with the Marine Corps for two reasons. One was lack of pre-position equipment out there. The Army invested heavily, so did the Air Force, in pre-position equipment, and of course the Navy was out there. I really was trying to push the Marine Corps into putting some pre-positions stocks out there. They were designated bed down bases for aircraft and everything else and they had nothing there. The Air Force would come in and use those bases and the other issue I had is in the no-fly zones, the maritime intercept operations day to day, they played hardly any role. I thought they should have

been down there with the Air Force and the Navy flying Southern Watch. There was a lot of resistance to that. The Commandant at the time, General Krulak, told me that his emphasis was in the Pacific, they weren't that interested, and I told them, "I can't keep you in a war plan, you know, in any way if you're not going to play." I mean, you've got to come for the practice in order to play on Sunday. And then a couple of times we'd have flare ups. I'd get calls saying, "You've got to ask for the Marines. You've got to ask for the Marines." I said, "In order to ask for the Marines, I've got to have you show up." Now, when General [James L.] Jones came in, I asked if he would come out and take a look at the region and he said, "I want to come out with you. I actually want to see your AOR with you." So he actually came out with me and we flew around and I showed him everything. We paid calls on everybody out there, and he started to turn it around. He had some of the squadrons come out and started to fly Southern Watch . . .

Allison: Based out of Kuwait there?

Zinni: Yes, based out of Bahrain and Kuwait and they also pre-positioned some yellow gear.

They got more involved in the day-to-day stuff so, you know, by the time . . . and of course then I got with the joint land component command, I MEF and MarCent . . . very cooperative in making that work so from what I saw in the beginning and by the time I left, I saw the Marine Corps becoming much more engaged in that. Now I never had a problem with MarCent and I MEF particularly. They were really committed to it into the planning and into the work and then beginning to see more involvement on the day-to-day stuff, was encouraging. But it was like pulling teeth in the beginning. The one thing—and that was difficult for me is MarCent was also—MarForPac [Marine Forces

Pacific], was also MarForKorea. We had one headquarters answering three big commitments. I mean Korea and . . .

Rudd: Multiple regions.

Zinni: Well, the two MTW's [major theater war], they were in both of them and when I was out there in I MEF I knew when like J.D. Howell was the MarForPac, he met himself coming and going. One time the, I think it was Admiral [Prueher] was CINCPac [commander in chief, Pacific], he was asking me, "You've got to tell "Beak" [Lieutenant General Howell] to stay around. He's my Marine component commander. I need him here." I said, "Sir, you're asking him to stay around. The poor guy's got a commitment in Korea and he's got a commitment in CentCom." He's got to go to the Ulchi Focus Lenses and the Internal Looks and do all this other. He's meeting himself coming and going. So I never like the components lay out. I thought I had a better idea but we had one component answering to too many of the big events.

And even I MEF, when I was at I MEF, we were combined Marine Expeditionary Force [CMEF] Korea, which was a big commitment. I mean, we had five divisions under the CMEF under the plan—two air wings and all kinds of other SeaBee [U.S. Navy construction battalions] regiments and heavy army engineers. It was a "Battlestar Galactica." And you really had to understand—General Luck was very demanding and operationally very savvy at really getting us boned up. We were in 1003 war plan. We had to really be boned up on that plus CentCom made us the designated ATF [amphibious task force] for operations in Africa, Somalia, and other things, which we actually did at Kenya, and some humanitarian disaster relief. And then we also were part of MarForPac—I mean PacCom [Pacific Command—on a day-to-day basis and answered

to them and, in addition to that, we actually answered to SouthCom and provided forces down there for some missions and to EuCom when I first got there. We were answering the five CINC's at one time and it just seemed to me that we were getting spread really thin and so, I mean your other component commanders are yours day to day. I mean, I had 3d Army. You know, I had the Air Force, the Special Operations, and the Navy components, didn't belong to anybody else. They were mine, so here was the Marine Corps that belonged to, you know, three people.

Allison: What about an MEU [Marine expeditionary unit]?

Zinni: I didn't own any. I mean, the MEUs came from either WestPac or the Med. They would come down and spend some time in there. We'd try to time their deployment so when we had a gap in the Army . . . the battalion combat team we kept in Kuwait. We had a gap, we tried to get the MEU in if we gapped the Army combat team in Kuwait. So the MEU would come down and spend a month or so and go out, but there weren't any MEUs that were under CentCom. They came from WestPac or the Med.

Rudd: What's the future for the Marine Corps? We've got a big dialogue going on here: back to full spectrum operations, need to get better at COIN, need to do both . . .

Zinni: Need to do both in order to stay balanced in my mind. If you put all your eggs in one basket, history has shown that fortunately at time—[for instance] John F. Kennedy asked [General David M.] Shoup how many counterinsurgency forces he could provide; he wanted the Marine Corps to become the SF [special forces]. And Shoup said 189,000 at the time—there were that many Marines and he said no, you don't get it. Kennedy said, "I want this to be specially oriented." He said, "Look, we'll do what we have to do there, but we're going to keep our other missions." Then Kennedy went off to Special Forces

but had we become unbalanced then, what would have happened after. Remember when Binkins and Record wrote this *Where Does the Marine Corps Go From Here?* You're irrelevant after Vietnam, you know? And we had to prove ourselves then in Europe. When the Bill Linds were saying you've got to mech up, the Marine Corps needs to become heavy. We were going to create these MCATF's—Marine Corps, Marine Combined Arms Task Forces—you need more tanks and all these LAVs [light armored vehicles] and General [Louis H.] Wilson then wisely said, "No, we're going to stay balanced. We'll do it all. We'll task organize for that but we're not going to become a mech force. That's the Army's mission." He resisted that. We would've withered on the vine in 1989 when the Soviet Union collapsed had we gone that way. So throughout our history, it's always balance that counts and people that say you've got to lean one way or the other make a mistake. You have to be first highly ready, secondly, highly deployable—and then, you have to emphasize in my mind that the basic training that you need, the basic qualification. You take a highly ready, highly deployable force, you ensure it has the right systems and is [as] well trained on them as they can be, and that, to me, is where the Marine Corps has to be. We'll always keep our naval character. I think we made a big mistake when we got in this idiotic debate in the late '90s that I really objected to about becoming a supporting relationship with the Navy, becoming like any other joint force instead of this special relationship, and trying to walk away from the amphibious doctrine to this kind of relationship. And it was an East Coast, West Coast thing—we didn't have that problem on the West Coast. You know, our relationship with the 3d Fleet was superb. We were joined at the hip. They were in a pissing contest down here, you know, and so they were alienating each other. A big mistake. The Marine Corps

will always have to be highly trained, highly ready, highly deployable, and retain its balance in my mind.

Allison: What about combined arms? Is that still as necessary? That's been a traditional . . .

Zinni: No, I mean you can define it in different ways. You can define combined arms in different ways, but I think that will always be important and I think the Marine Corps—one thing I was proud of the Marine Corps is it went from being doctrinaire about its employment to being very flexible, and all and I can remember in EuCom, we had all these little things that we quoted as doctrine: You can't split the MAGTF. You can't do this, you can't do that, and finally we wised up and said we can do whatever you want. We'll do windows. We'll break down any way you want to and it enhanced our credibility. And it's kind of a refreshing—General Krulak, General Jones, they were very flexible in the employment of the Marine Corps. I remember both of them—General Krulak had told me, the question you ask is what's the mission and we'll do it. Don't ever turn down a mission. You're as flexible as possible. You ask for an opportunity to prove yourself and I think that carried us a long way. I think they did a lot to sort of break this sort of inherent doctrine-era paranoia that we always had, which I think we've done a good job to shake off.

Rudd: The Marine Corps got about a 30,000 man plus up during the past couple of years and as near as I can tell they went to bring back 9th Marines and attack gunship squadrons and so forth. Is that the right track? I mean, that's a first big plus up since Reagan as near as I could tell.

Zinni: Yes, I think it was important to bring back ground units because of the rotation. If we're going to stay on this kind of deployment cycle, we need to look at the units most heavily

deployed and give yourself some breathing space and that makes you more deployable, more ready, and more well trained by having a larger base to rotate from if your rotations are higher. I think the Marine Corps needs to review its global footprint. I think coming out of Okinawa and going to Guam is about as stupid as . . . you're strategically stranded in Guam. I mean why go to Guam? The training's going to be lousy. You're in the middle of nowhere. You're going to have family separation. The MilCon [military construction] would have to develop . . .

If you've got to come out of Okinawa? Come back home where [you're] next to your strategic lift. If the ships are going to come out of San Diego, and the planes are going to fly out of March Air Force Base or Twentynine Palms, and the training at Camp Pendleton and Twentynine Palms is the best you can have why not bring the forces back there? You know, I mean it's stupid. You're going to go in a place in the middle of the Pacific that's going to strain families and the quality of life, is going to limit your ability to train, you're removed from your strategic lift so you can't go anywhere without that strategic lift. It has to come get you. And you could go where the strategic lift is and get better training, better family stability, better readiness. What am I missing because of some sort of idiotic political decision to go to Guam? I mean who's threatening Guam? And the MilCon there is going to be out of sight. We can't afford it now. And you've got all sorts of environmental constraints and political constraints and Saipan, there's nothing there. I mean it is patently ridiculous. Who makes these decisions? I mean it's idiotic.

Allison: Are you saying we really don't need to keep a presence in WestPac—better to be back in CONUS?

Zinni: Well, you can keep a presence by fleet deployments. I mean if 7th Fleet is forward, there will always be a Marine component to 7th Fleet. But it can deploy out of the West Coast. It can go out there like we do everything else. Just like the ships do. If you want to have an MEU somewhere, if you're going to have an ARG [amphibious ready group] somewhere, and you want to have an MEU there, that's fine. If you want a homeport, an ARG in Guam and you're going to have a MEU there. And I would say deploy the MEU there. Operate out of there, that's fine. I mean if it has its strategic lift with it and it's small enough, the MilCon and the training is supported, that's fine.

Allison: So how much time did you have?

Zinni: I've got to go.

Rudd: Thank you.

End of Session X

UNITED STATES MARINE CORPS HISTORY DIVISION
Oral History Interview

Interviewee: General Anthony C. Zinni
Date: 6 June 2008
Length: 1:29:17
Interviewer: Dr. Fred H. Allison

SESSION XI

Allison: This is the 11th session of the interview with General Anthony C. Zinni. Today's date is the 6th of June 2008, and we are again at the Breckinridge Hall at Marine Corps University. Good morning, sir.

Zinni: Good morning.

Allison: Thank you very much, again, for doing this whole interview. You've been very generous with your time. It'll be a very significant addition to the oral history collection and provide and enhance our understanding of this time period in the Marine Corps. I'd just like to cover a couple of topics that I think are important to finish the story. Of course, there's so much that we could talk about but I'd like to ask one thing in particular that occurred during your time at CentCom [Central Command], the embassy bombings at Nairobi and Dar es Salaam. And President [William J.] Clinton decided to respond with a Tomahawk strike on the camps in Sudan and Afghanistan. I wonder if you could give me some background on that and how that decision was made.

Zinni: Right. To begin with, going back to the Khobar Tower bombings just before I arrived at CentCom, the emphasis on force protection was really strong in all of CentCom, and we did a lot to look at every place we had military personnel to ensure the force protection measures were very strong. I became concerned about some of the

embassies, two embassies in particular, one in Qatar, and the other in Kenya, in Nairobi, and actually sent an e-mail to the secretary of state, voicing my concern. They were very vulnerable. They were on the street. They were, I thought, susceptible to possible attack and made that clear. The one in Qatar was planned to be reestablished and eventually was. There was no real plan for Nairobi. I think there may have been over reliance on intelligence threat as opposed to vulnerability, in my mind, so it was hit in Nairobi, as was Dar es Salaam in Tanzania, which was not part of CentCom's area of responsibility, but European Command. And, of course, we suffered significant casualties when you include the Kenyans that were killed, because it was on a very busy street, tremendous truck bomb. We lost one Air Force sergeant who was part of our military cooperation and security assistance program there, and obviously it was pretty traumatic for everybody concerned. We immediately established a joint task force. I had my inspector general on an inspection tour of a part of the AOR [area of responsibility], a brigadier general. I ordered him down immediately, with his little IG [inspector general] team, to be the JTF [joint task force]. We obviously sent medical personnel. We added, bolstered up the security personnel, but I wanted somebody in charge down there right away, to be called the JTF, reporting right back to our headquarters to see what we needed. And Steve Johnson, Marine brigadier general at the time, later went on in grade, was the commander of the JTF, established himself in Nairobi, ran our medical and other support services, plus the security. Just to say a little bit about Nairobi, what concerned me then is the embassy set up in a temporary location, which was in the middle of a neighborhood that was again very vulnerable, as they were looking for another place to establish the embassy. We had a tremendous

ambassador there, Prudence Bushnell, who was a hero. She was wounded herself, actually, but did a tremendous amount of work, very courageous, had to deal with a very upset and angry Kenyan population and was struggling through all this, and the people that she lost in the embassy, and trying to reestablish a new embassy. We had added, I had requested, and we had added, a FAST [fleet antiterrorism security team] platoon down there for security from the Marine Corps. There was a lot of pressure from the Pentagon to pull them out and to turn the security back over to State Department. They just did not have the assets, so I really fought to say, “No,” I would not do that. I mean, it would have taken the president of the United States or the secretary of defense to give me that order. I refused to do it, under a lot of pressure, and I wanted to keep that FAST platoon there as long as it took for the embassy to get reestablished, and eventually it did. In the meantime, going to the point of your question, the president was very interested in immediately trying to do something to obviously go after those that had conducted this attack, and it was traced to al-Qaeda and those in Africa that were part of the al-Qaeda network. The problem we had is there were no really good al-Qaeda targets. Ever since the threats that had come out of there—now, Khobar Towers was not an al-Qaeda attack.

Allison: It wasn't?

Zinni: No, by best assessments, the FBI and everybody else, they assessed it was actually Iranian in origin. So this had come, this attack, right after Osama bin Laden in 1998 had made all these major announcements, or fatwas, that he issued, announcing that all Americans would be targets, not just military personnel, that they were entitled to what he called the Islamic bomb. And so this looked like their big coming out event,

to show that they were on the world stage, or regional stage. Of course, we'd been tracking al-Qaeda and looking for opportunities. Osama bin Laden was hard to find. We knew he was in Afghanistan, but where? There were reports of multiple houses that he moved around. There were all sorts of sightings, but nothing really firm. And al-Qaeda targets, hard targets, were hard to come by. We knew they had these training camps up in the northern parts of Afghanistan and elsewhere, but, again, these were just sort of open areas with jungle gyms and all. They weren't really substantial. Catching people in or out of them might have been iffy, but the president wanted to do something. The best targets we had immediately, from a CentCom point of view and from the agency and others, were these camps. So the decision was, we will take a shot at these camps. There was a report that it was possible that Osama bin Laden might be in one of these camps, on a visit. But the intelligence said that the reliability of the report was not very strong. It just was an outside possibility. But, still, even if it was an outside possibility, I felt strongly we should take the shot, as obviously the president felt and the secretary of defense and the chairman. We knew full well, if we took the shot, nobody was there, it would look like, well, they pumped a bunch of missiles into jungle gyms in nowhere, but I think if you had any chance at all, you had to do it. So we fired TLAMs [Tomahawk land attack missiles] up into the camps. We destroyed some infrastructure, not very much, and there were some casualties amongst terrorists that were training there. There w[ere] all sorts of reports given by al-Qaeda and others, "Oh, these were schools," which were discredited. We knew from our intelligence they were not, although some of the news media and others picked up on that and were led to believe that. As a matter of fact, I was very upset with Dan Rather

and others who bought into that and knew better, and I had talked to them about this beforehand, and the intelligence was clear they were not. We didn't get tremendous results. We knew the odds were great against it, but we did hit the camps, and we did score some successes and casualties. There was another set of targets that was given by the agency, and they were in Sudan. And, frankly, this caught me by surprise, because none of these targets were on my target list at CentCom. There w[ere] a number of targets that supposedly had originally been al-Qaeda facilities. One was a pharmaceutical plant that the CIA had evidence at one time might have been producing a precursor to make chemical weapons and might have had an association with Saddam, also. There was a tannery that had some association. They were a set of about five targets. When we looked at the targets, and I had a lot of reservations about them, many of them were in the middle of Khartoum, and if you shot them, you were going to have a lot of collateral damage. The targets, the information in the intelligence was old. It goes back to the time al-Qaeda was in Sudan, which made it many years older. Many of the facilities had changed hands and been bought and sold, like the pharmaceutical plant. And, as we kind of vetted through all of these, I mean, I could hit them. We could put a ship in the Red Sea to take the shot with the TLAMs. As we vetted these, eventually four of the targets dropped out, just either not that viable, tremendous collateral damage, unsure about if at one time they were al-Qaeda associated, were they still? The pharmaceutical plant stayed in, and there was very strong support that this was a viable target. But, again, I had my doubts. I don't doubt the factual part of the information. There w[ere] actually samples taken around that proved that there was a precursor there being used, but it was so old, and, again, it had

changed hands. And I think the chairman, General [Hugh] Shelton, and others had reservations. But the decision was to shoot it, so we shot it. We shot the TLAMs, and we did it at night because we had intelligence that it was unoccupied at night and everything else, and we destroyed it. There were subsequent lawsuits that probably still exist to this day over it. So I'm not sure—the agency was adamant about the reliability of the information. I would question its age and whether it was still relevant, but it was shot. So those two actions were taken. There was a lot of follow-up, a lot of pressure out of the counterterrorism, Richard Clarke, and others out of the White House, all of these sort of fleeting targets—well, we think Osama bin Laden's here; we think he's there. When we had shot the targets . . . when I was directed to shoot the targets, from the submarines and B-52 on Afghanistan, my concern was that we had to go over Pakistani airspace and if they are seen . . . because the Pakistani Navy is very alert. There was detection. There were numerous radars out there, but if this were seen, could they believe it was an attack from, say, India or somewhere else? Could they get a reaction? When I voiced those concerns to General Shelton, they ensured the vice chairman, General [Joseph] Ralston, was in Pakistan and right before the shot would talk to General Jehangir [Karamat] here, the chief of their military, to say you're going to see some missiles come over at that moment. Don't panic. These are ours. And, actually, one missile did go astray and land in Pakistan. So we fired the missiles. Then we were getting really crazy stuff. There was what they believed to be one of Osama bin Laden's houses. I was getting tasked to prepare the targeting for this house. The house was in the middle of Kandahar. The collateral damage would have been excessive, with this outside chance . . . the intelligence wasn't that reliable or

vett[ed]. And I just said I'm not going to shoot those kinds of missions. Those are ridiculous. The president's going to have to get somebody else if he wants to shoot that. I told General Shelton that I wouldn't do that, and Richard Clarke and others really were angry, said I was a criminal for not shooting these things. And, as it turned out, had we shot them when they were planned, nobody was in there and the collateral damage [according to] my targeters would have been excessive. There were mosques and marketplaces and everything around the home. And then there w[ere] all sorts of . . . the 9/11 Commission later on, which I testified before, there were all sorts of charges coming out from Richard Clarke and others that I refused to launch attacks and put a carrier battle group out there and launched attacks. We never had a carrier battle group out there.

Allison: He said that you wanted to put a carrier?

Zinni: No, they said they wanted me to and I refused, refused to launch. Well, first of all, we would have never run attacks off a carrier battle group. It's nonstealthy air. If we did an air attack, it would be with stealth aircraft. We would have done it with B-2s, or, obviously, F-117s or something like that we positioned, or we would have shot TLAMs. Tactical air, nonstealthy flying, the carrier is very visible. You have a Pakistani Navy out there and others out there, fishermen. It's very evident that they're out there. Radars can pick them up. And so there was never, ever anything that went on that required a carrier or launching off the carrier to do strikes there. And I don't know where this came from. The 9/11 Commission had it. They claimed that Richard Clarke and others had made this assertion that I refused to do these carrier strikes. A carrier was never an option on anything out there, and I told them that. There was this

crazy set of beliefs about targets that we refused to run. The only thing I refused to shoot were specious rumor-report targets that had us raining TLAMs and other ordnance down in the middle of a city. Had we have done that then, it would have been untenable for us to even stay in the Middle East, just to blow up a city, just looking for potential houses and rumors of where Osama bin Laden might be. There was a lot of criticism of shooting the camps, because there wasn't much out there, but I thought it was the right decision by the president. We knew that the odds of getting something out there were a long shot, but there was no real problem with collateral damage. The camps were terrorist camps. It sent a message that we knew where they are, where they trained. So to me it was the right decision to make. The president would not shoot missions in the middle of cities, based on rumor reports and everything else, which I thought was right, too. I certainly wouldn't have done it, and what it created. And so it pointed up a number of things. I think it pointed up how little we knew about al-Qaeda and the terrorist organization. It certainly pointed up the flaws in human intelligence. We just did not have the . . . and I talked to the senior intelligence officials in all the agencies. We just did not have the kind of connections and the inside information, based on HumInt [human intelligence], to be that reliable. It also pointed up the careful security measures that al-Qaeda took. We knew that Osama bin Laden didn't sleep in the same house at the same time. All their movements, their covered communications, their throwaway cell phones, use of couriers, and minimizing communications all made it extremely difficult, and I think probably that really highlighted how difficult and how sparse our intelligence was.

Allison: Yes, he is evidently a very difficult person to find. I mean we still can't find him. It's interesting, you mentioned Pakistan, because you had a good relationship with Musharraf.

Zinni: Yes.

Allison: And so you wanted to keep that intact and you could work with that.

Zinni: Well, at that time, Musharraf was not the chief of staff yet. It was still General Jehangir Karamat, who is a very good friend and educated in military schools, Leavenworth and all, very Western oriented, later became ambassador to the United States, still a very good friend of mine I stay in contact with. He was under a lot of pressure to act against the government. There was a lot of dissatisfaction with the Sharif government at that time, but that was before General Musharraf. And General Musharraf came in after him, replaced General Karamat. We immediately hit it off, had a really great personal relationship. My first visit out there, when he took over the top military post, I spent about four days out there and actually he asked me to bring my wife. My wife and his wife got to know each other on a personal basis. He had asked me on the last day to dinner, when I was there. He said, his quote was, "Tony, let's be friends." And I said, "Sure. Of course we're going to be friends." He said, "No, you don't understand what I mean." He said, "Our countries have a lot of political differences. There's a lot of issues between our countries and a lot of adversarial relationships." He said, "Ours has to remain strong. Even though it may be just on the strength of you and I, we have got to keep a close military-to-military relationship." I agreed, and he wrote down his personal phone number, gave it to me, wanted mine. He said, "We're going to need this in the future," which was prophetic

in many ways. “We’ve got to keep this connection.” And we exchanged it. It came in handy for several reasons. One was the Kargil incident. Kargil is a place on the Indian side of the line of control, where the Pakistani military and the Indian military are faced off. And usually what happens, because it’s such an elevated, high area in the mountains, and I’d been around that area and actually been up to the Siachen Glacier north of there, on the Pakistani side, to see all these places. They’re faced off and fighting sometimes at unbelievable altitudes, suffer more casualties from oxygen deprivation and the effects of the weather and everything. But, normally, they come down from these positions when winter sets in, then go back up with the thaw. And sometimes, if one side gets back up before the other side, they might get a little advantage. They might take a few more kilometers along this disputed line, and the Pakistanis had evidently come up. The Indians were slow getting up, and they ended up moving so far inland to this place called Kargil, they had created a major salient. It wasn’t a small tactical advantage of a few kilometers or so. This was huge. And now this presented a real problem for the Indians, because it allowed them to actually be able to affect their supply lines up to the Siachen Glacier and elsewhere. So the Indians, in effect, counterattacked, and so you began this exchange and escalation on both sides. There was sort of a gentlemen’s agreement that fighting in the area along the line of control would stay within the line of control, but this was so significant, it was building up, and both sides were on sort of an automatic mobilization, begin to mobilize and escalate. Then there began to be air-to-air encounters. There were some planes shot down, and this thing was beginning to escalate and grow, and of course both being nuclear powers and the problems. The president became concerned. Our

government became concerned. The decision was made now that I should go, representing the president, and see Prime Minister Sharif and tell him, on behalf of the president, that the president wants Sharif and the Pakistanis to withdraw from Kargil, so we can deescalate this and come down. The president was willing to meet with Sharif, but only after the withdrawal had begun. He would not meet with them until the withdrawal had begun, and this was the message I was supposed to take. So I went to Pakistan. Sharif made it clear he did not want to meet with me. He didn't want to meet with a general. I think he wanted to meet with, like, secretary of state or somebody more senior, preferred to have a meeting with the president first. The president did not want to do that. So when I arrived in Islamabad, there was no meeting, and he had sent the signal he wasn't going to meet with me. I had, as an assistant with me, somebody from the State Department, too. And I met with Musharraf and I explained to Musharraf, and Musharraf says, "Well, you tell me why we should withdraw from Kargil." And I went through the rationale and our side. He just wanted to hear the argument, I think. He knew why I was there, and I don't think he was, as a military man, in favor of withdrawing. They've got this advantage and whatever. But he did say, "I will make sure the prime minister hears you out." He said, "Go back to your hotel and I will talk to the prime minister." And I was actually on my way back to the hotel from there and actually there were demonstrations in the street. The people did not want to withdraw. They knew I was there and we were driving through these demonstrations. They did not want to withdraw from Kargil. And on the way back I got a call from General Musharraf, who said the prime minister will see you. So I went over to the prime minister's office in the government building

and Musharraf was there, many of the cabinet were there. I laid out to Prime Minister Sharif the president's case. Sharif was insistent that really it would be helpful if he could have a meeting with the president. That at least would give some support or clout to make it easier, and he pointed outside the window and said, "See the demonstrations? This is a bad spot to be put in." And I said, "Look, my message from President Clinton is that he will meet with you. He has agreed to do that and be supportive of this decision. But he isn't going to meet with you," and I used the term, "in the shadow of Kargil." I said you have to start withdrawing from Kargil. He has to know you've made the commitment to withdraw, and he'll certainly meet with you. And I got a lot of arguments from the cabinet and it was very resistant. Sharif wouldn't make a real commitment. On the way out, as we were walking out, he turned to me privately and he said, "What is it you want me to do?" I said, "Look, just begin to move. We will know you're moving." Obviously, we could see it through satellite intelligence and everything else and imagery. "But if you begin this move and I can tell the president you have made the move, he will have the meeting." So he said okay. We watched events in Kargil and we began to see movement, they began to move and . . .

Allison: One guy started pulling back.

Zinni: Yes, it wasn't exactly a massive withdrawal, but they began to move, and then the Indians were claiming they were attacking the hill and driving them back, which further angered the Pakistanis. And then Sharif has the meeting with the president. It's actually on the Fourth of July, which was back here in Washington, and then formally agreed that he would withdraw. The claim to this day was that it was the president that

convinced him. Even people who have written about the Clintons, like Bruce Riedel, who's the national security advisor and others, that it was the president who did this. He convinced Sharif. Sharif said, "Yes, the president did it," which kind of shocked me when I saw all that, because that was a precondition to meeting and they were leaving it to me to determine if there was withdrawal, and there was, the beginnings of it. It wasn't massive; it wasn't quick. But he did start to show enough movement that I could tell the president, "Yes, he's acting on this." Of course, they've denied that to their people, saying it was President Clinton at the end. But, I mean, there were people with me that know what was said in there, including my political advisor and State Department rep, and others. But the point there, Musharraf didn't say anything one way or another during the whole meeting, but he got me the meeting with Sharif that I would not have gotten otherwise. So that was the first important . . . in that relationship. And, remember, it wasn't the U.S. ambassador who was going in. I was the one being sent and it was through Musharraf, because the ambassador couldn't get it. Later on, in 2000, at the change of the century, the millennium change, the Jordanians picked up some terrorists that were going to attack American targets during the celebrations, the New Year's celebrations.

Allison: The Y2K thing?

Zinni: Well, yes, but there were going to be attacks in Jordan and Egypt and elsewhere. They broke this cell and this gang and they stopped them up. Jordanian intelligence and their security forces are always very good. In interrogating these guys, they found out their headquarters was in Peshawar. Their bosses, they were running the operation in Peshawar in Pakistan. So I got a call from the State Department and from the White

House that said, Musharraf had taken over the government, and I'll get back to what happened there. But the State Department broke relations and there w[ere] no communications or anything else, and I had been told, "Break off all your relations with Musharraf. You're not to have any communications with him." And, again, I'll come back to when he first took over, what happened. And so now that they had the information from the Jordanians, they wanted to act on this headquarters that were running this cell out of Peshawar. So I get a call saying, would you call Musharraf, your friend, and ask him to go out there and act on this intelligence and the rest of it? So I called Musharraf, and he said, "Sure, I'll be glad to do it." So Musharraf sends out and he stops them up. He stops up the headquarters, arrests them all, takes the computer disks and everything else. And then I get a second call from the White House and the State Department, saying, would you ask Musharraf if we can send agency and FBI, others, over there to interrogate these guys? So I call Musharraf, and he says, "Sure, send them." So they go over. Then I get a third call, saying that we understand there were some disks, computer disks, and others. Could you call Musharraf to see if he would share those? I call again and Musharraf agrees. And there were two more calls, five calls, and they agreed to all this. Now I want to take you back to when Musharraf took over the government. He was out of the country, visiting, I think, at Sri Lanka, when Sharif decided to remove him, and he wanted to put in a guy who had been head of the intelligence service. Well, the chief of staff has always been a senior army combat arms guy, usually comes up to the corps commander. And this intelligence chief was not a combat arms guy. The army would never accept him. He was Sharif's guy. He had actually been in Washington a couple

weeks before and asked to see me. I went up to see him in Washington, and he was really nervous. I didn't know what was going on. He was kind of incoherent, the way he was talking. There were some of our intelligence people with him, in fact, and I couldn't figure out what was going on. Then it was clear that he was going to put him in charge. I think he came over here, at least originally, although he never expressed it, to sort of get a feel out for how much support he might get. That's only my assumption. So Sharif puts him in charge while Musharraf's out of the country. Well, immediately the army rejects this, the military, and they execute a coup. Well, Musharraf jumps on a commercial plane to come back, had seven minutes of fuel left. Sharif was denying landing for him, and there were school kids on the plane and everything else, and his special operations units took the airfield with about seven minutes of fuel left, and he had landed. So he takes over the government. U.S. breaks all relations. I was directed not to have anything to do with Musharraf. I'm in Egypt on Operation Bright Star, with Secretary of Defense Bill Cohen, and we're there side by side, watching some of the training, and all of a sudden my communicator, my SatCom [satellite communications] communicator, comes in and says, "Sir, you have a call that they patched through from General Musharraf." So I turned to Secretary Cohen, who's sitting next to me, I said, "What do you want me to do? Am I allowed to take the call or whatever?" And he said, "Well, take the call, but don't make any commitments." I said, "What commitments am I going to . . ." So I took the call, and General Musharraf said, "Tony," he said, "I just made this call," and he had just taken over. He said, "You're the first one I'm calling. I just want you to know why I did this," and he explained the whole thing and the events and he said, "I'm determined

that we're going to have democracy, but not in form, in substance. Whatever it takes, I'll make decisions and I'll be in charge as long as it takes to get there, and that's my commitment, and I just wanted you personally to know." I said thank you, and I told the secretary this and he said, "Fine, you're not to have any more communications." So, now, going back to the five phone calls, after he did all these things, I went back to State and the White House and DoD [Department of Defense] and I said, "Now, look, Musharraf did all these five things for us. Obviously, we don't like military guys in charge of governments, but he's made a commitment. I think it's important for our security interests that we have to have some kind of relationship, and what are we going to do for Musharraf? What are we going to do to maybe . . ." and they said nothing. And I said, "Okay, just remember, he did this." So I called Musharraf back and I said, "I regret that no one wants to lift sanctions or create a better relationship, military to military, that I think that's important," get their officers to our IMET [international military education and training]. And he said, "I didn't do this because I want something. I did it because it's the right thing to do." And he said, "I don't want anybody to think I did this because I was looking for something." And I said, "Well, I'll make that clear back here." When a headcount *[inaudible]* visited with Musharraf when he first took over as the military chief of staff, we had a lot of conversations together. I asked him what his biggest concern was about the military. He said half his officers had not been outside of Pakistan. And I said, "What does that mean?" He said, "Look, we have a tradition of our officers being educated in the United Kingdom, the United States. I like that international flavor, that connection to the West. Because of the sanctions on IMET and other things, they don't get that. They're turning inward;

they're very bitter." Some of the sanctions after the first Afghan war, where they supported us and we walked away from it and when the Soviets were thrown out, they had 500,000 refugees, when they tested their nukes in response to an Indian test and we sanctioned them. They all thought this was wrong. They bought F-16s from us. We refused to give them their F-16s or return their money, and we were actually taking it out of the money, they gave us a storage fee, and they were flying vintage aircraft and pilots were dying. There was a lot of bitterness in the ranks, and he was really concerned about this, both he and his predecessor, General Jehangir [Karamat], who I knew, and actually predecessor to General Jehangir, General Waheed [Kakar]. I had a very close relationship with the Pakistanis because of Somalia. When I was the commander of I MEF, first of all, I was with the Pakistanis in the first Somalia effort in Restore Hope. But then back in United Shield, when I covered the withdrawal of the Pakistani Brigade, because they were concerned about their ability to withdraw the brigade, I had briefed General Waheed and we had worked together with the brigade. They were the primary UN force, and so they were really appreciative. It went so well, no casualties, they got out intact and they had done such a great job of working together. That relationship went back through three chiefs of staff, then. And there were even later on . . . I would get calls from State Department that our U.S. ambassador couldn't get in to see Sharif, and so he would call me and say, "Could you help me get in?" And so I would call Musharraf and I said the ambassador's trying to see you. He can't get in. "Oh," he said, "have him come by the house." So I ended up being used this way and Musharraf was helping, and I said, this is going to bite us in the butt. If we don't build a strong, at least military-to-military relationship, there are

going to be security issues down the road that we're going to have problems with and we're going to need them and need to work together, and we've built this adversarial relationship, which is unnecessary. And the commander of CentCom and the chief of the military have seen this and have tried to work through this. Earlier on, when Strobe Talbott, the deputy secretary of state, wanted to go over and talk about some nonproliferation issues, he couldn't get in the country. They wouldn't let him in the country. They wouldn't give him air clearance. And, finally, he came down to my headquarters with his staff to use my airplane, and I was the only one that could get in because I called General Jehangir, and I said, "We're being denied air clearance. They want to come over and see the" He said, "Just get in the plane and come." He says, "I'll make sure you're okay." So this military-to-military connection, on the thin line of the two senior leaders, is what held this together. It was awful that congressional sanctions and lack of understanding of the administrations, two of them, put us in a situation then at 9/11, when a stronger relationship would have helped us. And of course now, given the situation, it's even worse, with Musharraf really out of power. And it wasn't condoning military taking over the government. Believe me, he was reluctant to do it. He wasn't even in the country, but he was watching the corruption and the impact and the need for change and he made mistakes, probably, as a leader and all that, although he did some good things. The economy was improving; there was more stability. But, again, I think our foreign policy and our whole approach, not only to Pakistan but the Middle East and everything else was so terrible throughout this . . . up until today, it's been that way, and we've paid a price for it.

Allison: This relationship, was it ever used again, say, after you retired, because we did rely on Pakistan for getting into Afghanistan.

Zinni: I stayed in contact with Musharraf. I mean, even to this day. I saw him several times after I retired. He visited the United States a couple of times, asked if I'd come see him, and I went to Islamabad several times for business and I made sure I went by and visited with him and saw him, so we've maintained a personal contact, but obviously this administration was not interested in my help.

Allison: Well, that's a different story. We talked about that last time. We relied on Pakistan's bases and stuff to move up into Camp Rhino from Pasni, Pakistan, or anything . . .

Zinni: No, not direct contact. The chairman, Admiral [Michael] Mullen and others have asked—Admiral [William J.] Fallon, when he was there—they asked my views on Pakistan in relation to my advice, views, and all, on an informal level, which I was glad to provide, but nothing officially and formally.

Allison: You had mentioned in that discussion about Pakistan, turning over these terrorists that had been captured to the FBI for interrogation and stuff like that. There's this undercurrent—maybe it's an overcurrent—out there that says there's a lot of torture, rendition, this stuff going on. Were you ever aware of any of that going on?

Zinni: No. No, the one thing that disturbed me in my time at CentCom, we did a rendition, when we picked up the guy that shot up outside the CIA that had killed some people in the street and escaped and was back in Pakistan. And there was a rendition done. I got a call when I was a CentCom commander, saying, do you have a U.S. military plane in the area? And we checked and said no. They said, well, there was something going on and it was a danger that they might take some action. They wanted to know what this

was. Well, it turned out to be this plane. They were doing this rendition to go grab this guy, and so I called the chairman and I said, “Look, I’m the combatant commander here. If something goes on in this area of responsibility, I think I should know about it.” Oh, and he was very apologetic and said, “No, nothing goes on in your area of responsibility that you don’t know about.” I mean this was maybe confusion and maybe an exception. Without saying things I can’t say, I know for a fact things were going on that I wasn’t made aware of, and that’s extremely dangerous, because, first of all, the people in charge look at the commander, or the unified command commander, as the military. And when they come to you with things, or you have to deal with the aftermath of things that go on like these renditions and everything else, you need to be aware of them. And so I really think this idea that people can do things in a given area of responsibility without informing the unified commander, or where the unified commander is not the supported commander, where he’s in charge, is a big, big mistake. This idea of SoCom [Special Operations Command] being the supported command, or all sorts of maybe black operations going on without the four-star unified commander knowing is a terrible mistake, and we’re going to pay a price for that kind of business one day. And we’re getting carried away with that stuff now.

Allison: Yes, that’s what I was going to ask about. Below-the-radar kind of stuff, and that’s one of the things that’s mentioned, torture and rendition. Are you talking about military operations or are you talking about . . .

Zinni: Well, it’s all operations. I mean, some of it’s quasi-military. Some of it is using military special operations for things. Some of it is agency and other capabilities. I can tell you, from my time there, I was not privy to any of this, and I think it’s dangerous.

I don't know what goes on now or after I retired. I certainly have no need to know, but I think that kind of business is dangerous. You put our troops at risk when you're out there on things you don't know about. It's going to be the combatant commander that's got to clean up any mess afterwards, that's going to have to deal with it. You degrade his authority and trust, because everybody views him as the senior military authority, must know what's going on and they're going to come to him. And when he looks like he doesn't know and it's confusing, you've degraded his authority. This whole business is allowed to grow a life of its own that I think is extremely dangerous, in compartmentalizing to the point where the senior four star doesn't know what's going on. I have no desire to know things I don't need to know, but I do have a desire to know things I need to know, because of my responsibilities.

Allison: Sort of along the same lines, there's contractors, are a big part of the war in Iraq. What's your perspective on the contractors and also law of war issues?

Zinni: Well, I have several perspectives on that, because I obviously work for a company now that does contract business in Iraq and Afghanistan.

Allison: DynCorp?

Zinni: DynCorp. On the other side, when I was with CentCom, we used contractors. I think that probably one of the things that's going to come out of the Iraq War is a reexamination of the whole business of contracting, and I think actually that's a good thing. We have overwhelmed the whole environment with contractors. In some organizations in government, they're not used to these contracts, like State Department. They have a difficulty managing the scope and understanding it. Obviously, DoD understands it a lot better, because they've been in this business for a

while. I think we ought to do several things. One, sit down and say, what is it we should contract and what is it we shouldn't? And the rationale for that ought to be based on two things. One, what is appropriate? If those that feel that, say, contracting physical protection or security, the business that Blackwaters are in and the Triple Canopies and even DynCorp to a small extent—if there's a political decision that there [are] questions of accountability and appropriateness. And on the issue of appropriateness, if they feel that we only should do this with government agencies, in other words, create a military capability or expand it, create a State Department capability, that these are only going to be government employees that do it, because of appropriateness, that would be one criteria. The second criteria, which I think there's a lot of myth around, mistakenly, is what's most cost effective? And I do think you would find that there are certain thing[s], like physical installation security, like just the inner protection and the guard duties and all that, it's much more cost effective to have companies do this rather than put military units in. And logistic support, maintenance support, I think you'll find the same way. The fallacy is when you compare a salary to a salary, to say, well, wait a minute, the contractor has, let's say, a retired master sergeant that's working out there and you look at the salary you're giving him to go to Iraq or Afghanistan to do his work, and you're looking at a corporal and you're saying, well, look, we could do this for less by hiring a corporal. The question is, you can't, because you can't just look at the salary. What cost is it to recruit that individual? What does it cost to house him and feed him? What does it cost to provide his benefits in the military, his retirement, his insurance, if something happens to him, his SGLI [Servicemembers Group Life Insurance]? What does it cost

to build the structure and the unit and the TO&E [table of organization and equipment]. When you hire a contractor, the contractor takes care of all of that. So if you look at cost effectiveness, you have to look at how well do they do the work? And if I take a mechanic out there that's been a mechanic on that helicopter for 30 years, I would put him against somebody that's only been a mechanic for five or six years out there. And the level of work and the kinds of support work may be better, or at least comparable, and when you look at the costs, compared to establishing a military organization to do it, you need to look at the total cost. So cost effectiveness, plus appropriateness of the mission. Then, once those decisions are made, then I think you need to say to the public, this makes sense. It's in the best interest of the taxpayer and the support for our military and our philosophy and our Constitution and accountability. Then I think the other thing that needs to be fixed is monitoring these contracts. We've written some contracts that have been bad. I think both industry and the government have been responsible for that. I think there needs to be better ways to hold industry accountable for things that they do out there, both on an individual basis and the conduct basis and performance. I think there needs to be better systems within the government, on their side, too, on living up to their responsibilities under the contract. It's not always been there. And there needs to be a system that, going along, people are saying, yes, this company is executing this contract in the right way. Don't wa[it] to the end and afterwards and then come back and say, well, it was a mess, it was wrong. The contract was written badly. There was no supervision. The industry didn't have the right program manager, or whatever. So, I mean, the short answer is, I can speak for the company I work for, who is very supportive of having a hard look

and reform this, and I've expressed this to congressmen and others. If you're a good company, it's in your interest to have that kind of light and reflection and reexamination put on it, and I think it's certainly in the interest of the government to redo that now and find out where the problems really are, what problems are myths, whose responsibility, is it industry or government? And then clean it up and establish a process and a quality contracting capability so we eliminate these problems, whether they're real or perceived.

Allison: That sort of phases—what you're talking about there, with the contractors and controlling them and managing them, and even just using them, reminds me of what you wrote in your book, *Battle for Peace*, in which you have individuals that you can mobilize to deal with issues, this interagency operational planning team.

Zinni: Well, in the company I'm with, most of the people we have are retired military or senior retired police, because we do police training and security training. So we have a very senior officer. We have a lot of retired general officers, colonels. We have a lot of retired, very senior NCOs and others that have expertise in logistics and transportation, security. We have a tremendous stable of quality people that work in this area, with a lot of years in. They're willing to take the risks to be supportive. Now, it's not just for the money. It's not as great as people think. My company, since the war began in Iraq, has suffered—in Iraq and Afghanistan—50 Americans killed, working for our company, and about 130 to date, now, non-Americans who work for our company. This might be local security people we hired or expat Brits or others that we've hired to do certain things—they're very proud of their service. They're very proud that they were there to support the troops or support the State Department.

We're not only just in Iraq and Afghanistan. We're in Somalia. We provide the logistic support for the peacekeepers in Somalia. There are no Americans there. These are Ugandans and Burundians and others that come in, that don't have logistics capability. We're under State Department contracts. We work for the United Nations in Sudan, providing support there. We work in Liberia, providing training for their police and their security forces and their military, to train them to be responsible, capable security forces and understand how to work with the people. To have this kind of expertise that can build capacity, build institutions the right way to me is a good thing. It needs better management. We need to clean up the abuses in the system, and I think all sides need to come together to figure out how better to do it. Its appealed to me mainly because not only does it support our troops and other things, but where we're in the third world doing things that nobody would do. We can't afford in the United States military, given our commitment in Afghanistan and in Iraq, we can't provide the logistics support, the transportation, and all these other things into Somalia or Sudan or these other places. And so you can contract for it, which is actually cheaper than using military units, to provide the same support. Got to ensure the quality, got to ensure we live up to the contract on all sides, too. But we also do humanitarian assistance. We do de-mining work. We work on developmental projects in the Third World. We're training the security forces and helping with the infrastructure in places like Haiti, where a lot of people won't go, and it wouldn't happen if it didn't happen through private contracting and private business. We use locals. We employ locals. We employ local companies. We guarantee or assure the quality of the effort because the contract's with us. But, by employing them, we ensure

the money that's invested goes into the local community, that you get a small construction company or whatever, you're building their capacity so that they'll have the ability to work and do things following on. It isn't all negative on the contractor side.

Allison: There's that perception, though, out there.

Zinni: Yes, of course there is. Well, the other option is, then, build a two million-man military and see how the taxpayer likes that, or what it's going to cost [to] do that and go out and do it.

Allison: Just basically you need some public relations—these are the things contractors . . .

Zinni: It's not what people want to hear, though. We do have public relations. Literally, our books are open. As a public company, they have to be open. We have media relations. We have government relations. There are times we've made mistakes, and the important thing is always admit your mistakes. There are times when we were accused of things we just did not do, and there's myths about the business that people don't know.

Allison: So it's sort of that people don't know about it so they think all of it's mysterious stuff, the black helicopter in the night and stuff.

Zinni: Well, we're not, I'm not, in that business. We do a minimal amount. Less than 2 percent of our business is the personal security. We do it for State Department. We basically only do it in Mosul and that area. We're very careful. We have more stringent rules of engagement than either DoD or Department of State has. We vet our people very carefully. Over 65 to 70 percent don't make it that apply. We put them through exhaustive training, not only training in technical stuff, but training in rules of

engagement and behavior. We do psychological testing. We monitor them very carefully. They account for every round. We have State Department officials that are security organizations, diplomatic security; they're with us. There's a review and a post-mission briefing so everybody understands what went on and procedures were followed. We don't keep anybody that violates—even if they report wrong, make a report mistake, we get rid of them. That has to be flawless performance. But, again, that kind of business is tough, that particular end of the business.

Allison: The personal security.

Zinni: Personal security.

Allison: All right, thank you. Thank you for that comprehensive answer, sir. All right, anything else on CentCom? To wrap up CentCom, could you maybe talk about what you consider your most satisfying accomplishments from that tour of duty?

Zinni: Probably most satisfying is I didn't serve in the Pentagon. I was fortunate to go to CentCom. I was glad of that. I mean I like the operational end of the business. I think the most satisfying thing, in all seriousness, of CentCom, was the relationship. I really felt that we worked hard in my time there on building relationships in the region. And I think the strongest relationships that the United States government had in that region, were the military-to-military relationships, far stronger than the diplomatic, economic, social, cultural, or anything else. We built a strong relationship. And I think even amongst the nonmilitary leadership and people on the street, that relationship was seen more positively than any other. We worked hard at it, and you had to, to maintain it. We understood the culture, I thought, more than others did. We built a military-to-military relationship that allowed us to fight side by side in places, to operate together,

to build lifelong friendships, to trust each other, and it was far more substantial than any other relationship we had out there. Unfortunately, I think events and decisions have degraded that, going down, but to me that was probably, I felt, the best achievement we had done.

Allison: I've often wondered, what do you think would be the status today if we had not invaded Iraq? You talked about in your book, or somewhere I saw, that we had him contained. I get the impression that it was sort of crumbling from the inside.

Zinni: Yes. I think eventually Saddam would have been taken out by somebody else that probably would have seen Saddam's ruthless dictatorship was not only harming the country internally but relationships outside that were cut off. I think you could have seen a Republican Guard general or somebody that would have taken over and then looked out to the world and said, look, I'm ready to do business in some way. And then I think we would have had maybe a more orderly transition. I don't think it would have been easy, but then there might have been a way that we would have had more international support for putting pressure on that individual to change the governance system, to clean up some of the problems internally, in terms of persecution of certain elements of the society and other things. I mean, in my mind, the whole purpose of containment is to have an easy fall. In other words, to sort of bring down the regime and have a replacement come about in a way that is less traumatic, less costly, than an intervention. The whole purpose of containment is that you realize, like the first President Bush did, that intervening, and Secretary [Colin L.] Powell, to use his phrase, you break it, you own it. We did not want to own a broken society in a country. We did not want to do it unilaterally. We wanted to ease it down and then

have international and regional cooperation in restructuring it. By doing this unilateral breakaway from the United Nations process that, again, Secretary Powell was having success in, and launching in there over created and imaginary intelligence that didn't exist—because I knew it didn't exist, I saw it, and going in and trying to impose something—we created a mess. And the damage is obvious, to our image, to our reputation, to our effectiveness, to our military, on and on and on. So the rebuilding relationships out there is going to be tough. The new administration, I think if it's smart in the first year, can have successes in this, but it's going to take a lot [of] work, because there's been a lot of china broken out there.

Allison: So then you retire from the Marine Corps.

Zinni: I did.

Allison: And in the same way, could you look back over your Marine Corps career and say what's the most satisfying aspect of being in the Marine Corps for 30-some-odd years?

Zinni: Well, I mean, there's the obvious, the personal satisfaction that comes from the camaraderie and the friendships you make, the sense of pride in the Corps and all it means and it stands for, having the privilege to lead Marines at virtually every level; all that is important. I think the experience it gave you to live through a very interesting period of time in our history and be part of that history, from Vietnam to Somalia to the Middle East and all over the world, I just think it was a tremendous life experience in a tremendous organization, with tremendous people. I think that's the end result. You walk away from it feeling like, boy, I'm glad I didn't do anything else with my life. It's just so incredible. And I think it gives you a degree of respect, just by virtue of having gone through it, that's imparted on you by being a Marine, by

having had those experiences and being part of all that. So it was tremendously fulfilling in virtually every way. Looking back on it, I don't think I would have changed anything. I certainly would have made better decisions. There are probably places where I felt I could do a better job personally, but in terms of what the Corps allowed me to do and what my government entrusted me in doing, I could not have asked for more. At the end of that, there's not one thing I would have rather have done, anywhere along the way, or one position or billet I would have rather have had. From my personal desires and what I felt to me was most interesting to me, I had the ideal career.

Allison: Did you ever try to make it the ideal career?

Zinni: No.

Allison: What was your philosophy as far as success in the Marine Corps?

Zinni: Early on, when I was a young officer, I remember General [P. X.] Kelley, our Commandant, he had said one time that the worst thing you could do is try to manipulate your own career. He was talking about himself, and he said, "If you look at my career, I don't have the ideal career, the odd jobs I had." He says, "Take the assignments and do the best you can. Let people know what you want to do." I mean we have a way of letting the monitors know what we want to do. My philosophy is I always wanted to be in the Fleet Marine Force, I wanted to be out there on the operational end, but so does almost every other Marine. But my feeling is you take what you're given and you do the best you can. And I kind of felt that if you establish your reputation in areas that you're given and you like, you'll go back to those areas because you'll be seen. I like the operations and training part of the military, as most

people do. But I wanted to be in operational units. If I couldn't be in operational units, I wanted to be in training and education units. And so I spent most of my time in the Fleet Marine Force, or, in fact, here at Quantico in the education system or the training system. And even when I wasn't in billets in the operational forces and operations, I was in training, so very few exceptions to that. I had a career in what I enjoyed most, operations and training.

Allison: So you retire and I assume you're going to move—or you did move back to Williamsburg, move to Williamsburg and the land that you had bought earlier? Did you have any aspirations for a post-Marine Corps life?

Zinni: I had no idea. I had been offered—I had talked to friends, like General [Joseph P.] Hoar and others, and took the transition course and everything else. But I really didn't understand what was possible. As soon as I retired, I had people that offered me positions and everything else and do some consulting work back in the Middle East for businesses, which I kind of liked, because I'd maintained my connections out there and they were good companies. I really enjoyed senior mentoring work. I was at Joint Forces Command, asked to come to places like Quantico and other places, the Army War College, the Marine Corps University and others, to lecture, which I enjoyed, doing that. I got approached by Tom Clancy, writing a book, *Battle Ready*, and . . .

Allison: He approached you?

Zinni: Yes. So there were a whole series—I was doing odds and ends more than anything else. The best advice I ever had was from General Paul Van Riper, a good friend, retired, actually in Williamsburg, near where I live. And he had retired a few years earlier and he said to me, “The best advice I could give you is split your life into

thirds.” He said, “One third of your life, you need to work. You’re retired. We never make any money in the Marine Corps. You retire, you’ve got bills to pay, mortgages, everything else. You’ve got to obviously do something that puts food on the table.” He said, “But make sure it’s good work and it’s work you’re proud of and everything else.” And then he said, “The other third is do what you like, whether the pay is good or not, but keep doing things you like to do.” And then the other third, he says, “You have an obligation to put back.” He says, “So you have to do things that will pay you nothing, may be burdensome in some ways to do them, but you have an obligation. You never end that obligation.” So when Marine Corps Command and Staff or somebody calls and says we’d like you to come, you have to do everything you can to meet that obligation. And I remember General [Robert H.] Barrow had said that, too, and so, in my mind, I tried to pursue that and I tried to keep that balance, and that was really good advice. There are things you are doing because you want to ensure your family and your home and your financial situation is fine. Certainly, I left the Marine Corps, especially when I bought a house, completely in debt, so you don’t save a lot in the Marine Corps or anything like that, raising a family, putting kids through school and everything else. So there was a requirement to get out there and do that, but I didn’t want that to just be my life, and I sort of kept it down to about that third portion of my time. I found a lot of things I really liked to do. I liked to do the senior mentoring. I liked to do some of the writing. That was not very profitable, if you will, but I enjoyed it, so I wanted to keep that so I was doing things I truly liked to do and pursue. And then the obligation part, you have to respond to that. If somebody feels you have something to offer, you’ve got to do it. Probably every other week I get

asked to come down to the Congress because somebody wants to talk about Iraq, the Middle East, the military, whether they're Republicans, Democrats or whatever. I've always responded to that. I felt it was an obligation. I mentioned before, the chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, Admiral Mullen, who I've know well throughout the years, who was the battle group commander in CentCom when I was out there. If he calls and says, "I'd like to get together with you and mull something over," you've got to go. Marine commanders, in the buildup to the Iraq war, General [Robert] Magnus, General [James T.] Conway and others, General [Henry P.] Osman had asked me to come and give my views, my impressions, advice I might have. I think you have an obligation to do all that, whenever you can.

Allison: Well, since you brought it up, I think we talked about it in the last session. We talked about the way that we went into Iraq. We talked about that. And then you had an unexpected opportunity to work for the State Department. Maybe an overview of that, how you got . . .

Zinni: Yes, I got a call from Bill Burns, who had been ambassador to Jordan when I was at CentCom, he, at the time after my retirement, headed up the Near East Bureau in State Department, he's in charge of diplomatic efforts in the Middle East, and Bill was a good friend. He called me up and he said, "Look, Secretary Powell is thinking of reengaging in the peace property, Israeli-Palestinian, but he wants to do it a little bit differently. He wants, instead of running this sort of out of the White House and everything else, he's thinking of starting something but keeping it within the structure of the State Department." And he says he wants Bill Burns to run it out of there. And he said, "Look, I've got the whole Middle East region and this is totally time

consuming.” He said, “I’d like to have somebody that is working this with me, to be able to do it.” And this is before 9/11. And he said, “If I’m able to get this off the ground, would you be interested in helping me with this? We’d sort of be a tag team, work together and it wouldn’t take—just some of your time and be able to get involved.” I said, “Yes.” I said, “Heck, you’ve got to do this. We’re going to work this out.” Now all of a sudden, while this is going on, all of a sudden, 9/11 hits, everything else is happening. President—well, before 9/11 hits, but—excuse me, 9/11 does hit . . .

Allison: It does hit. You were thinking this is an unpaid, sort of a volunteer position.

Zinni: Well, no, what had happened then is it started to blossom into more than that, than what Bill and I had discussed. Secretary Powell is now bringing this to a bigger scale. We had 9/11 occur; he saw the importance of this. He was now pushing to make this bigger. So my talks with Bill now were becoming—”This is becoming bigger than what I first described to you. It looks like this may be a major effort and you may actually go out there as the envoy, and how do you feel about all this?” Powell’s still working this, and I knew Secretary Powell fairly well, certainly Rich Armitage, his deputy, very well, worked for him before. And they were asking me. I said, “Look, I’m willing to take this on. Three things I ask. One, no pay. Two, no title. I’m not after this for a title. I don’t want anybody accusing me, looking to be an ambassador at large or whatever that—and no publicity. I would rather do this as quietly as we can do it and make this work. And they said okay, that’s fine. We can do it under those arrangements. The no pay was because I really wanted to do this in a way where I could leave, stay, be my own man, my own person in many ways. And also, frankly, it would have complicated other things that I was doing. I would have had to divest

myself of a lot of things I didn't want to divest myself of. You're not going to be working, obviously. You push it off and suspend it, but rather than try to come back to it and all, just make it a lot easier down the road, although you have to comply with State Department rules and regulations in terms of conflict of interest and all the rules applied. It just made it easier in terms of administration. And then the no publicity, I didn't want anybody seeing me thrown into this to say, "Oh, he's just after another title or something like that." And the publicity end of this, I just really thought—I don't want to be dealing with media and press and all that kind of stuff. Let State Department do that. Then, eventually, Secretary Powell made the announcement at a speech he gave in Kentucky. That's the first time I understood what my role is. I went up to State Department and when they finally decided, it was I was going to have one day of briefs and go over for the first thing. I wasn't that familiar with the peace process. I sort of followed it from obviously an area of interest. Israel and the Levant were not in CentCom's area of responsibility. So, as I went up there, I started getting the briefs. Secretary Powell took me over to the White House. I met with the president, the vice president, Condoleezza Rice, who was then national security advisor, and we kind of went over my mission and what I was going to do. It was clear I . . .

Allison: Was that the first time you met President Bush?

Zinni: Yes, and it was clear I was going to work for secretary of state, and it's not going to be a White House position, which is fine with me. That's the way I would rather have it. Although, the only thing that held to the three requests was the no pay. They gave me a title and then they lent a lot of publicity to it, and so I went over and began the

process, which basically was in three chunks. And Secretary Powell wanted me to try to get the [George] Tenet plan into play in the implementation. There had been agreement, but not implementation. It basically dealt with security issues. I went over and dealt with Prime Minister [Ariel] Sharon and Chairman [Yasser] Arafat and long meetings and sessions, trying to work out an implementation plan, Hamas, Islamic Jihad, Palestinian Islamic Jihad, and the Al Aqsa Brigades, all the extremist groups. We were constantly attacked. My first time over, there were seven major attacks, and the second time we had the *Karine-A*, the ship with all the munitions that were coming in. The next time, there was another seven attacks, and topped by the Passover attack. It was very difficult. I had more success on the Israeli side and, really, although there was a lot of resistance there too to some of the things, but eventually, with a lot of reservations, I was able to get them onboard. Most of the Palestinians, I think, wanted to move on the plan, certainly the security guys. Arafat did not. He kept blowing me off, blowing me off. He would say he would, but he would never issue the orders. And, to make a long story short, it just ended up where it got delayed, and they weren't interested in committing to the obligations there, and so, in the end, after the Passover bombing, it all broke down. And Arafat's credibility with the U.S. and everybody else went down. It was unfortunate. I just don't think, from that experience, it was my sense that he wanted to sign a deal. He wanted to go out of this life never having committed to anything and leave it to the next guy or whatever. I thought there were a lot of people around him, Palestinians and others, that would have moved forward. When he left the scene and [Mahmoud Abbas] Abu Mazen came in, who I knew, I think it was a great opportunity. I think we, the U.S., and the Israelis missed

an opportunity then. A lot more could have been done, so it was a great experience in mediation and negotiation. I had done some of that before for the president, the Eritreans and Ethiopians with Tony Lake, the former national security advisor. Of course, I did it in Somalia and mediations and work with Aideed and others, with Bob Oakley, the business in Pakistan to Kargil. So now I did this effort. The State Department then asked me to take on another one. They wanted me to formally do it as a private citizen through the Henry Dunant Centre in Geneva, which is a nongovernmental organization that does conflict resolution and peace mediation. It was with the Free Aceh Movement in Aceh, which is a province of Indonesia on Sumatra, and working with that rebel group and the government. And so I took that on. That's where the wise men came in. They had a group of what might be considered senior mediators, called wise men. We worked with both sides and with the mediators, the Henry Dunant Centre. I got very close to the Henry Dunant Centre, really got to know them. I'm now on their board of directors. I've done other work on peace mediation with them, provided advice on other things they do, but I did it formally and officially as a private citizen, at the request of the State Department. I also had a request to do work in the Philippines through the U.S. Institute of Peace. The U.S. Institute of Peace is federally funded by Congress, but it's not part of the government. President [Gloria] Arroyo of the Philippines had asked President Bush to help with their mediation and their work in Mindanao, with the Moro Islamic Liberation Front. So, through the U.S. Institute of Peace, they had asked me to engage in that. In all these cases, I went out there and met with the rebel groups. I was in Aceh, went out into the field, and met with them. In Mindanao, I went out in the field,

met with the rebel groups and everything else and helped try to work the efforts.

Eventually, the Aceh thing worked out down the road. There were some fits and starts

and everything. I got to know now-President [Susilo Bambang] Yudhoyono of

Indonesia. It was the chief mediator. We did a lot of work in Geneva, out in Aceh,

even in Versailles, in Paris, where we did the mediation, working with the U.S.

Institute of Peace. Spent a lot of time here in Washington, out in the Philippines and

actually in Mindanao in several trips down there and working with the different

groups. So I did a lot of this kind of work, which I would consider that middle

category of things you like to do. There wasn't any great compensation for this. As a

matter of fact, really none, other than expenses and other things, but I really enjoy that,

and I've tried to keep my hand in that. I attend, when I can, things—and I'm

privileged to get an invitation to the Oslo mediator, where the top mediators in the

world meet in Oslo every year, to sit with them, from different experiences around the

world, and I've done a lot of work in conflict resolution with different academic

centers in the United States and taught courses on it. I continue to work with the Henry

Dunant Centre and even with the U.S. Institute of Peace on and off.

Allison: Wow. It seems like you had, especially in the Philippines, you laid the framework, for some very successful developments there that came along later on. The Philippines . . .

Zinni: I don't think we—the Philippines is still a work in progress. Aceh, when we left it in HDC [Henry Dunant Centre], we were trying to get it implemented. It had fallen through. I think honestly, when the tsunami came through and then the process was reengaged, it carried on and it was a success. I think what I got out of all of this is a better understanding of the whole business of conflict resolution, mediation,

facilitation, how it should go, doing it as a representative of the U.S. government, doing it with a nongovernmental organization, working through nonprofit organizations and through things like the United Nations and others, how you do negotiations, all the techniques and possibilities that are involved, and there's a whole bunch of them. I mean, some day I'm going to write a book about it all, I think.

Allison: After your leadership book?

Zinni: Yes, well, I've got another one before that, and implementation of the process and everything else. There are now universities that are giving degrees in this stuff and everything else, and, to me, it's just amazing and interesting and obviously is something we need to invest in more today because if you can resolve things through peaceful intervention rather than military, it's much more probably effective and less costly in lives and in treasure.

Allison: I wanted to ask, sir, where were you on 9/11? What are your memories of September 11th?

Zinni: The day before 9/11, exactly the same time, I was actually passing, driving right past that portion of the Pentagon that was hit. The next day, 9/11, I was home in Williamsburg and I had the TV on CNN. I was doing some work and all of a sudden they had this breaking news. A plane had crashed into one of the Twin Towers. My first sense was, hmm. I thought maybe it was like a private plane or a helicopter or something that had happened, and they sort of showed a picture of it and it sort of looked like there might have been other helicopters or planes around. Then, they said a second plane had crashed in the other building, and then my first impression of that was it might have been a news helicopter or something up there, to have this tragedy

of a second plane. It was unclear. Nobody was talking about airliners. But then, all of a sudden, as this began to unfold, what had happened and everything, I was really in shock and how this all was—and of course, then, my phone started ringing off the hook, I mean, newspaper reporters and everybody else wanting—it's obviously al-Qaeda, what do you think is going to happen and all this? I started to get calls from friends in the Middle East that were really horrified at this. I mean friends of mine that were Muslim and/or Arab were calling, sending me e-mails, how badly they felt, how tragic, how personally hurt that these were—might have been Arabs or Muslims that did this, how terrible that that all was, condolences, and everything else that were coming in. There was a lot of shock throughout the region out there about all this and how it could happen.

Allison: It's the kind of day you never forget.

Zinni: Well, it was worse than that. I actually had two personal connections. There were a couple of officers that had served with me at CentCom that were killed in the Pentagon. And my daughter, one of her closest friends in college and, at that time, the guy she was dating's brother, who married her closest friend, he was killed in the Twin Towers building. And because she had been a finance major and an MBA, a lot of the kids that she knew were working up in that business, because they were all the financial people in there. So she was really devastated. They couldn't find out what happened to him. He had called his wife right before, saying, "A plane has hit the other building. I'm going to finish up a little work. They're telling us to get out. I'll get out." But he never made it out, and so a lot of tragedy. They had two kids and she was distraught. A lot of friends she knew were in the building and all. So there was a

personal connection through my daughter to the events in New York and then, of course, to the Pentagon.

Allison: Really something else. After that, I knew the world was going to change.

Zinni: Well, the world started to change when the Soviet Union collapsed. It was not at 9/11. We keep thinking it was 9/11 that changed the world. I mean, 9/11 was a dramatic moment, certainly, but I really believe, and as I said in the last book I wrote, that we didn't understand. The world started to change in 1989, 1990, and we never have adapted. We still act like we're in a Cold War or something like that. We never truly have made the—we're sort of playing catch up and reactive in this whole business. We lack a strategy, a vision, an understanding of the world as it is today. That's what strikes me more than anything else.

Allison: Just reacting to events.

Zinni: Yes, it's a very changed world, and changing world, and it didn't start changing on 9/11. It started changing back when the Soviet Union collapsed. We were coming into a different era, and we never really got it.

Allison: Is there a theme, though? Like we had the theme in the Cold War was communism against capitalism. Is there a theme like that?

Zinni: My belief is the enemy now is instability, unstable parts of the world. These are parts of the world that breed—become sanctuaries for terrorist groups, drug cartels, organized crime gangs, warlords, unstable parts of the world whose economies are in trouble. They damage the environment by industrial agricultural practices, cutting down rainforests. They grow poppies or coca leaves to survive and it's drugs on your street. They can't sustain themselves; so they pack up and move and we have

problems with illegal immigration and movements and migrations. You name all the problems; they're rooted in parts of the world that aren't stable. They aren't stable because their societies can't cope with the hostile environments they find themselves in, either natural or manmade. And they can't cope because they don't have the institutions, the political, the economic, the security, the social institutions. And if the first world doesn't understand that we need to help them build these institutions, we're going to suffer for it along with them. And sometimes I think we don't get it. We think we can build a wall along the Mexican border. We have two mighty oceans and nothing's going to affect us. But the health issues, the drug issues, the environmental issues, the security issues, the economic issues are all going to wash up on our shores, and we haven't figured this one out yet.

Allison: Do you see the predominant destabilizing factor being radical Islam?

Zinni: No. It's an element. Actually, I think radical Islam is a symptom. The only way—let's sort of change it to say extremism that is being done in an aberrant form or preaching of the religion. The only reason that has any traction is because there's an endless flow of angry young men that are willing to blow themselves up and do it. You've got to go back and say, where's the anger come from? The anger doesn't come from religious fanaticism. It comes from a political, economic, or social set of conditions, and then they become ripe for the picking for a guy like Osama bin Laden. There's despair; there's no hope. There's a sense of revenge, and he channels that all toward moderate Muslim governments, reformers, secular parts of society, and to the West, and to the United States, and they're flocking to it. You're not going to solve it by saying, well, let's go out and just try to kill them all, [break] their funding, do all this other stuff.

You've got to go back to a more strategic view. You have to make it unattractive. If you tell me the threat is radical Islam, the only reason radical nutcases like Osama bin Laden can be successful is that he has dissatisfied young people that he can con. Go to Mexico. The problem's not radical Islam, it's drugs and drug cartels. If you went to Tijuana today, they have billboards up that publicly advertise recruiting people to join the drug cartels. Now, why are young men joining the drug cartels? That's certainly not radical Islam. And who's joining the FARC [Fuerzas Armadas Revolucionarias de Colombia]? So, yes, it may be the most significant problem right now, but it represents a very small percentage of the Muslim population in the world, very, very small. It has appeal to young people who have a sense of despair, that there's no other approach. It's not all the United States' problem or anything else. I mean, we can help with this, but certainly others and their own leadership and their religious and governmental leadership have to take part in this, societal leaders. But we make a mistake saying, hey, our only real problem today is radical Islam, and look at it like another Cold War.

Allison: That's easy to do. I mean, that's kind of what Americans want to do. They want to identify the enemy and say target it, take it out.

Zinni: Yes, but it's not that simple. Look, World War II, we defeated the enemies militarily, but [President Harry] Truman and [General George C.] Marshall understood exactly what Woodrow Wilson did decades before. In order not to repeat this, you had to change the conditions. The success was not only in the military defeat. We had the same military defeat back in World War I. The success was in the Marshall Plan, in the creation of NATO, in the building of free-market economies and democracies and investment and stabilization of Europe and the Far East, too, and Japan and other

places. That was a success. Had you have just left them devastated, like we did in World War I, and you hadn't changed the conditions, if colonialism was allowed to flourish, militarism, all the same-old monarchies that had the same sort of hostile relationships, we would have had World War III. And so we prevented that by changing the conditions. So, sure, you have to take action. You have to take military action and security action, but that alone won't get it. I mean, how many times do you have to hear General [David] Petraeus say, in Iraq, there's not a military solution to this? I mean, the military can help you provide security, a better environment, a surge, which is not a strategy. It's a tactic. It allows you to secure the environment. Something else has to go on. There has to be a political, economic, or social set of reforms or reconstruction that has to go on.

Allison: I picked up on one sentence in the book. You mentioned that, in this time of when you're negotiating with the Palestinians and the Israelis, the Christians in the region had serious and longstanding concerns. What did you mean by that? I didn't think there were hardly any Christians there, but I guess . . .

Zinni: Well, they're becoming less and less, because they're being pressured out by both sides, honestly. And their numbers are becoming smaller, but you have 16 Christian denominations that have pieces of the Holy Land that they monitor and I got approached by many of the senior prelates there that were responsible for their piece of this about this is not just, from a religious point of view, a Muslim-Jewish. And it wasn't just an Israeli-Palestinian, that there's another group in here that has a vested interest and has equities in here that need to be viewed and protected in any arrangement, and it was the Christian population, a large Palestinian Christian

population, relatively large, but getting smaller and smaller. And, of course, the Christian churches that have Holy Land responsibilities. They all have a piece of the Church of the Holy Sepulcher and other things out in that region. And they were very interested in ensuring that they didn't just get caught up in the wash, that their interests—I convinced Secretary Powell to meet with the 16 leaders and the prelates there, which he did, so that they had a sense that their voice was being heard, too.

Allison: Will you want to discuss your plans for the future?

Zinni: I don't have any. To survive, go on the professional bass tour or something.

Allison: Are you serious?

Zinni: No.

Allison: Well, I guess that'll do it, then.

Zinni: Yes, thank you.

Allison: Thank you very much again, sir. We really do appreciate your support of Marine Corps History.

End of Interview