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**The Special Operations Command:
Structure and Responsibilities
Robert C. Kingston**

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The Special Operations Command: Structure and Responsibilities

Robert C. Kingston

The military career of General Robert C. Kingston has spanned 37 years and 16 campaigns in two wars, and includes command at every commissioned officer rank. His assignments include serving as Commanding Officer of the 3rd Special Forces Group; and Commanding General of the U.S. Army John F. Kennedy Center for Military Assistance and the U.S. Army Institute for Military Assistance at Fort Bragg, North Carolina. General Kingston has also served as Chief of Staff of the United Nations Command, U.S. Forces Korea, and the Eighth U.S. Army Seoul, Korea; Commander of the Rapid Deployment Joint Task Force; and as the first Commander in Chief of the U.S. Central Command. He has received more than 50 awards and decorations from the United States and foreign governments. Since his retirement from active service in 1985, General Kingston has been a consultant to several organizations with national and international interests.

Kingston: The Goldwater-Nichols Act was preceded by a bill initiated by Dan Daniel, a congressman from Virginia, who recently died. He recommended that the United States government form a military agency to be headed by a civilian with a three-star deputy. The three-star deputy would take the forces to combat. Some of us started talking to Dan and said, "Whom are you going to take to head this outfit? Some guy's going to just sit back with his forces and go to war? We don't believe it." That's when Senator Cohen got into the act. A lot of other things went into this defense reorganization.

In those days everybody was looking for something that they could put into the command and the more they got the better off they thought they were. You've had General Bob Herres up here talking about the strengthening of the Chairman of the Joint Chiefs, so I won't go into that. That was one of the forces moving to the reorganization, and there were many others, including the costly hammers and toilet seats business.

The perceptions of Congress about the JCS were very real. They felt historical dissatisfaction. They said it was layered, it was too big, and there was too much duplication. They also cited poor command and control, splintered advice, and service prejudice. They felt the material development process was broken and wasteful. They have a hell of a lot to say about what goes on and what doesn't, as was brought out in earlier discussions with Earl Lockwood. Congress had been telling the military that they're not paying sufficient attention to special operations, knowing full well that we will probably go to war with low intensity conflict or with special operations before we fight the major war in Europe, or before we fight the battle of the Pacific again, or things like that. I agree with them.

Congress was being stonewalled by the Department of Defense, which said, "We're going to take care of it. We're going to handle it." The budgets for the past several years prior to this Act contained less than 1 percent of the Department of Defense's budget for SOF (special operations forces). The Air

Force was not buying any new Talons or long-range penetration helicopters to insert or egress special forces teams. Some of the special forces radios that the teams needed were not being purchased, and Congress finally said, "Okay, we've had enough of it," and they passed this bill. Then there was the Packard Board — David Packard chaired a pretty high-powered board, the Blue Ribbon Commission on Defense Management. They came up with the same conclusions, relating to the acquisition process, the national command structure, national security planning and budgeting, and government/industry accountability.

The main points of the DOD Reorganization Act of 1986 covered duplication, integration, and enhancing the authority of the Secretary of Defense, the Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, and the CINCs. I'd like to talk about the Secretary of Defense and the Chairman. The Chairman, by law, no longer has to report on the sense of all the service chiefs. He probably does do that when he presents his deliberations to the Secretary and to the President. But he is the sole representative, or sole adviser to the Secretary of Defense and the President on military matters. Before, the Chairman would have to go up — and he didn't have a vote — and he would report on the recommendations of the service chiefs.

As far as the CINCs are concerned, Bernie Rogers* already had all the power he needed. I never had any trouble down in CENTCOM (U.S. Central Command). I guess when you set up a command you crank into it what you want, and I did that. But I think the CINCs have sufficient power if they will reach out and grab it.

Oettinger: When and where then comes the impression that the CINCs were lacking?

Kingston: Again, I never lacked, and there was only one person in the whole Department of Defense who wanted CENTCOM to be formed, and that was Secretary Weinberger. The service chiefs, the service secretaries, most of the OSD staff, and most of the Joint Staff, did not want U.S. Central Command formed. But Weinberger did because the President told him to.

Oettinger: So, your perception was that you had more than enough? I'm trying to understand why that view about the CINCs was so prevalent. Is it all just noise?

Kingston: Again, if you've got a three- or four-star in there and if he's not going to exercise those prerogatives that he should have, then I believe that's his fault. I never had any problem getting resources. The first time I went before the Defense Resources Board — the CINCs come in for one or two days and they each give an hour's pitch and it's show and tell — in the last slide I showed, as the U.S. Central Commander, I had 11 topics. Three were highlighted. And I said, "Mr. Secretary, you gave me the mission of putting a U.S. Central Command together. I can't do that job because the services are not giving me the resources, particularly the funding. Those three things you see highlighted are partially funded. The others are not funded at all by the services." Of course, they knew what I was going to say. I said, "Unless you, Mr. Secretary, and this board give me the wherewithal, I can't do what you told me." All of those 11 items were funded, my top priorities, because they took the money away from the services. And that's what was happening in special ops. They were giving it lip service but they weren't giving it resources — things, people, and money.

Student: What is the realm of CENTCOM?

Kingston: CENTCOM is responsible for all U.S. military activities in 19 countries: Pakistan, Afghanistan, Iran, Iraq, Jordan, all of the Saudi Peninsula, Egypt, Sudan, Ethiopia, Djibouti, Somalia, and Kenya, the Red Sea and the Persian Gulf — nice, tranquil, quiet places of the world. There are 500 different tribes in the Sudan. We had great fun ironing those boundaries out. I wanted to draw the line east of Sri Lanka and 200 miles west of Africa. Leave all the littoral countries to the European Command except Egypt, which I needed, and I wanted all the rest of Africa. The CNO (Chief of Naval Operations) fell out of his chair because that meant a new fleet in the Indian Ocean, which I think they need. You're not going to limp ships all the way back through the Malacca Straits.

And if you want a real thrill, I took over from Lieutenant General P. X. Kelley, USMC, with 257 people in my headquarters. I went into the joint arena and threw up slides that called for 857 people, nine of whom were flags or generals. Then the Director of the Joint Staff came and gave a pitch and he showed slides of the other four existing geographical CINCs, and they all showed less manpower than I needed. I then gave a pitch and said, "Now, here's the slide the Director just used, but here's the organization that these commands over the years have pulled out of the headquarters —

*General Bernard W. Rogers, USA, SACEUR, CINCEUCOM.

computer support, special ops, some of the intelligence units, and others." And I added them all up and I had requested the least in spaces.

Congress was dissatisfied when DOD failed to appoint the Assistant Secretary for Special Operations/Low Intensity Conflict as the law stated — they did form the office and it's in being right now. Congress directed that the Secretary of the Army, Jack Marsh, assume the responsibilities of this Assistant Secretary of Defense as well as be Secretary of the Army, and he is doing a good job with that added responsibility.

Again, you'll see that the Assistant Secretary of Defense has both special operations and low intensity conflict. The commander in chief, General Jim Lindsay, down at McDill Air Force Base in Florida, has special operations. The patch they wear is the one that Wild Bill Donovan wanted the OSS (Office of Strategic Services) to wear if they had a patch. But they never got around to putting a patch on their uniforms. It was given to Jim Lindsay shortly after it was announced that the command was going to be formed. He was smart enough to say, "Let's go back and use this." That's the patch they wear on their right shoulders now.

Oettinger: Earl Lockwood did not talk about Lindsay's background.

Kingston: Lindsay commanded the 82nd Airborne. He commanded the 18th Airborne Corps. He commanded the Infantry School. He's very highly decorated: the Distinguished Service Cross, several Silver Stars when he was an adviser to the ARVN Airborne, and he had a U.S. battalion in Vietnam too.

Oettinger: That pedigree could mean an apparatchik.

Kingston: There are four four-star generals in the United States Army who are OCS graduates: Fritz Kroesen, myself, Jack Merritt, and Jim Lindsay. In that order.

McLaughlin: Was he in special warfare, or does he have a special operations background?

Kingston: He was an A-team leader in the special forces, both at Fort Bragg and in Germany in the 10th Special Forces Group.

The Assistant Secretary is probably going to be Charlie Whitehouse, ex-ambassador to Laos and Thailand. He held responsible positions in Vietnam. His principal deputy, if he gets the job, probably will be retired Major General John Murray, who is a Transportation Corps officer. He was the last de-

fense attaché in Saigon; that's where they worked together, and Charlie has a lot of confidence in him. I know them both. I think that's the team we're going to get. Neither one of them has SOF/special operations background. Both are good men who will make it work.

The USSOCOM (figure 1) has a Washington liaison office and the joint studies and analyses group. They're the ones that are going to fuse the schools, the special forces schools, the special operations schools. The Army has one at Fort Bragg. The Navy has one in Coronado. The Air Force has one at Hurlburt. They've got to move them into a joint type of university with the three different specialties, and they're going to look for duplication. We've got the divers' school, the special forces down in Key West. They've got the Basic Underwater Demolitions (BUD) school out at Coronado. There may be some problems with duplication.

The headquarters J-8 is the comptroller. This command will have its own budgetary authority and responsibilities. It is the only unified command that has that. It also has the same contractual capabilities and responsibilities as a government agency. It is the only unified command that has the contractual capability. The services, or one of the lead services, do it for the other unified commands.

McLaughlin: Which sounds like we recruit, train, equip....

Kingston: In special ops the services recruit.

McLaughlin: Train, equip, and supply.

Kingston: The services are responsible for the training, but once they're trained and in units, General Lindsay is responsible for their continued training.

There are 573 people authorized in the special operations command. The last time I talked to Jim Lindsay, and that was last week, he had only 20 percent of the people who are supposed to fill special operations billets in this command, because he took over from REDCOM (U.S. Readiness Command).

In many positions within the SOCOM headquarters, you don't need SOF-qualified people. About 125 out of the whole 573 would be nice — the operators and the planners, and, of course, some SOF-peculiar intel support. He's got a DIA guy. He's got access to the whole community.

Oettinger: Something occurred to me as I was listening to you during the last three or four minutes as you were describing this. On a scale where ten is what you described earlier, when you took over

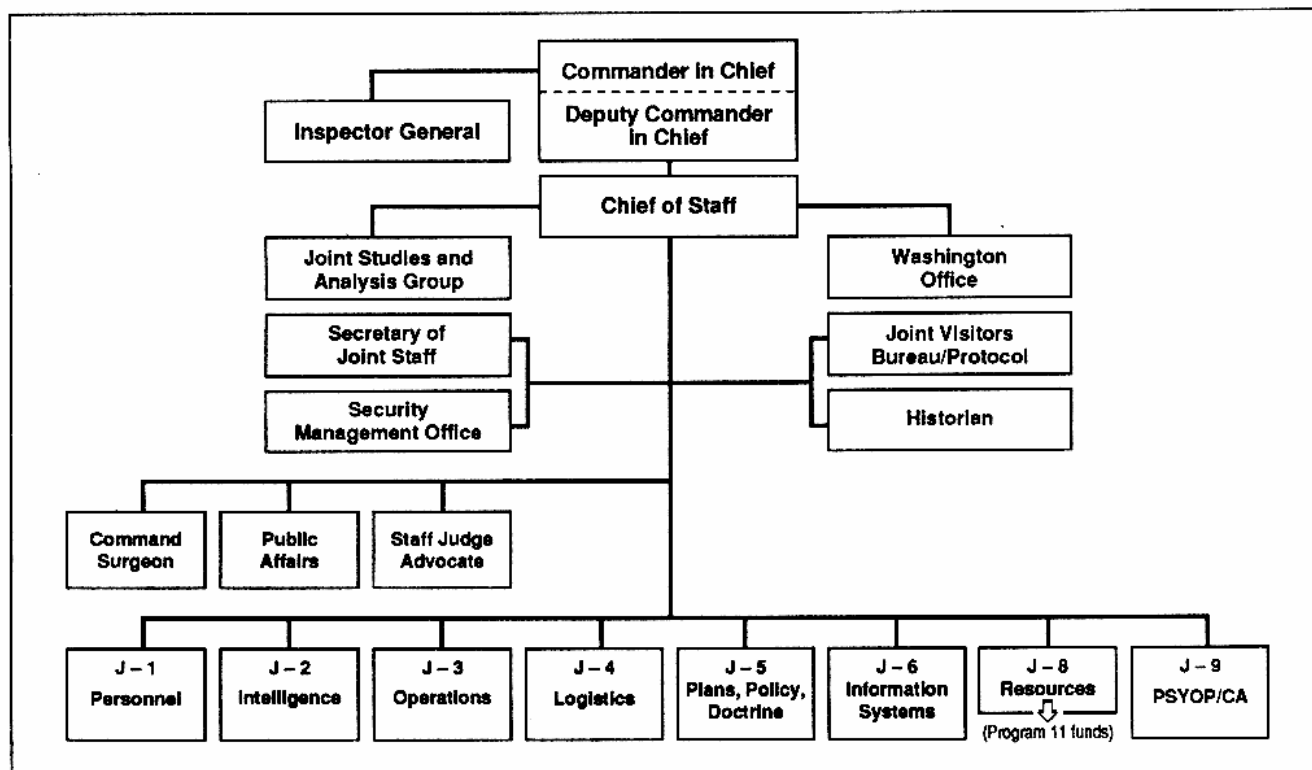


Figure 1. U.S. Special Operations Command

CENTCOM and you requested and you got, and one or zero is where the services and the Congress and the budget maker completely stonewall, and you've got an office and a hat and nothing happens, I couldn't quite tell whether you were describing a situation here that was like eight or nine or one or two.

Kingston: It's about six. The reason I say that is he's not exercising what I think he should, and again it's very easy to criticize, but I did put a unified command together. It was the last one in 30 years that the United States military had put together. The only way you're going to get out is to go bang on the desk of the Secretary or the decision makers. The services are fighting this terribly. The OSD is fighting it. It will be one year now this month that they're in arrears of Congress. So that will tell you the support that this is getting.

The Air Force is now coming up with new Talons and new aircraft. They're still waiting for the tilt wing aircraft to come in for the long-penetration helicopters. The Army has assigned CH-47s. That, in my opinion, is not the right aircraft and I wouldn't want to put a team for deep penetration in a CH-47. It's got the legs but you can hear it coming for miles.

Oettinger: Can I push on you just a little bit more on that, because as you were describing your own

experience, the flavor I got was, "Look, a CINC with enough muscle will get his way." In a sense that echoes what I heard on the record of testimony by Jack Vessey, when he was Chairman of the Joint Chiefs, before the Congress on the Goldwater-Nichols Act. He said, "Look, don't do me any favors. I have enough power as Chairman...."

Kingston: General Vessey used to say, "Don't fix it if it's not broke!" And he didn't think it was broken.

Oettinger: In a sense, that said that if every Chairman were like John W. Vessey, then maybe one didn't need the legislation. Congress thought otherwise and said, "Your average Chairman might be better off if there were more explicit authority — and if you had the Vice Chairman, etc., etc. I don't want to put words in your mouth, but I'd like to push you a little bit further to reflect on this. Is there not some need, perhaps given ordinary mortals, for Congress to be more pushy on the legislation?"

Kingston: If Congress was dissatisfied with the Secretary's nomination for the position of Assistant Secretary for SO/LIC, they could have called the Secretary of Defense over and said, "You threw a turkey at us. We don't want him." They didn't act. So he said, "You've already got my nomination. Either send it back or act on it," and so they just let it slide. Congress and OSD, in my opinion, are both

to blame, jointly, because they didn't want to push too far. You go over and talk to these people individually and they say, "Hell, we made the law, now implement it." It depends on whom you talk to. Some will tell you they shouldn't have made the law; that OSD and the services are doing just swell. I don't think so.

Student: Where does communications for this command plan come?

Kingston: J-6 is responsible, and the service components.

Student: That's not computer systems you're looking at, just communications systems?

Kingston: And computer. Of course, what they had to do is develop their own headquarters, and how they're going to operate. It's an entirely different type of operation from Readiness Command. They had to look at their role, and how they're going to use the Washington Liaison Office, or the Washington office. Historically, General Kelley set up a Washington office when he put the rapid deployment joint task force together. These guys had a brigadier general. They've got a brigadier general promotable in there now. They're attuned to the whole community, not just the Pentagon. They have regularly scheduled liaison visits with the whole community.

Student: What is J-9? Psychology?

Kingston: That's psyops (psychological operations) and civil affairs. The reason that's in there is that the first SOCOM, that used to be the JFK Center for Special Warfare at Bragg, had those units assigned.

The first mission of USSOCOM, "Monitor preparedness of SOF assigned to other unified commands," gets into very tricky command and control issues, because he's sticking his nose into the regional CINCs' areas and saying, "You're not preparing these people properly." And that could be very touchy. It's the only unified command with that responsibility — to stick his nose into another CINC's business. On "monitor the promotions, assignments, retention, training, and professional development of all SOF personnel," I asked Jim Lindsay, "How do you plan on doing this?" He said that they've developed a plan working through the component commanders. It's very difficult for an Army four-star general to tell the Navy, or tell the Air Force, to promote so-and-so and give him this assignment. He'd get short shrift, because that's none of his business, traditionally. But now they

have given him that, and I think he's doing it the right way, through the component commanders, so you stay in the service chain.

Program 11 is a budgetary program. General Lindsay will be the only commander in chief of a unified command with his own line item in the budget. I can tell you that within the Pentagon, everyone, particularly the Director of Program Analysis and Evaluation, is doing every single thing they can to prevent that command from getting its hands on the money. Right now, the first time that General Lindsay's people can actually influence the budget is in 1992 because of the budgeting cycle that we go through.

Student: Do you think the other CINCs are going to start wanting to have more control, as SOCOM is going to have?

Kingston: They're not going to get it. I don't think they need it. Again, when I say their own budget, that means for SOF-peculiar items. This mandates that he have a SOF research and development program, but it also mandates, as we did during the Korean conflict and in Vietnam, that he set up a little cell and can go buy off-the-shelf equipment. I can tell you right now that a lot of the rations and a lot of the camping gear that your campers and climbers have now are a hell of a lot better than what we produced at Natick, which produces the Army stuff. It's a hell of a lot lighter. It's a lot more comfortable. It keeps you warmer and drier in the wet and cold. It's about x percent lighter than what we've got in the military.

We did exercises, Bright Star, over in five or six countries in the Middle East — Egypt, all the way down to Oman — and they give me dehydrated rations. I don't have enough water for my people and my machines, and the Army comes out with a dehydrated ration. That's crazy. But there again, that's Natick.

Croke: There are some real problems on deciding what goes into Program 11. Some of those facilities and items are really joint. For instance, the Air Force has a big problem on what to agree to put in there.

Kingston: And also the white and black programs.

Croke: Oh, yes, very much so. And in command and control it gets very hairy. Who's going to step up and be the advocate for certain avionics packages? Some of them are very expensive. Who's going to pay for some special arrangements through the intelligence community to tie this global communications link?

Kingston: And he's got to have it.

Croke: I know, but who controls the gold down there? That's why getting resources is ultra sensitive. But they have a good argument too, I think, on their side, because these are joint use facilities....

Kingston: And this is a joint command. Every day there are discussions on funding and who's going to control it, and which service is going to have to pay for certain things.

Croke: If you're out there in the region with the CINC guys and in comes your version of Bob Kingston with his own version of command and control tied back to the National Command Authority....

Kingston: That will only happen under very special circumstances.

Croke: But you know that's the concern they have.

Kingston: The regional CINCs have to be kept informed, because they may have to send supporting forces if something goes down. They're brought in, but maybe they're brought in late.

Croke: The only point I was trying to make is that their concerns are real. It's a tough problem. They're going to have to walk some very difficult fences here.

Kingston: A great deal of this will be personality dependent. If you get some guy who's going in there as USSOCOM, hard-nosed, and he forces his way into another command, he'll get his nose broken right there. Jim Lindsay is going about that properly. He's visited all the regional CINCs and set out his charter. He's sat down on a one-on-one basis with them and said, "Here's how I'm going about this. Will you have any problems with it?"

Croke: With Program 11 put together, if you've got low-level aircraft and you have a special design amounting to hundreds of millions of dollars, those dollars are coming out of an Air Force budget, and now you've got the battle lines drawn.

Kingston: Because they don't control it. They may not even have a say on the design of what goes in there under this type of arrangement. But if he's smart, he'll listen to the proper people who will make sure. And they're doing that. They're talking.

Croke: The same way they formed the Electronic Systems Command down in San Antonio. I remember the fellow down there going up to see Bill Creech, who's in charge of Tactical Air Command. Creech informed him, "When your people fly on

my airplanes they no longer are ESC, they're mine." Of course, he won because he was a four-star and the guy was only a two-star at the time.

Kingston: Well, the missile command. The Army Missile, the Air Force Missile, the Navy Missile.

It's a real concern, particularly at the highest level. Herres is down here telling his problems and what the problems are with this. There, again, Congress didn't do a hell of a lot of coordinating with this bill. When they made John Marsh, who's an ex-Congressman from Virginia, responsible for being the Assistant Secretary, he told me they didn't even bother to call him and tell him what they were doing. I found that very difficult to believe, but I have to believe the man. I know him, and if he tells me that, it's true.

SOCOM is supposed to develop joint doctrine, tactics, techniques, and procedures for SOF. That means a systematic approach to SOF doctrine development, compatibility of service and joint doctrine, and the integration of SOF with conventional force doctrine. We give a lot of lip service to joint doctrine in the military. At Forces Command, and TRADOC (the Training and Doctrine Command) — they work with the Air Force — they produce joint manuals. We do it on our exercises. They're going to have to do it. These people can't go anywhere without aircraft. They can't survive in the environment without proper intelligence. They can't even get there without it. General Lindsay has got to bring this all together down at his new command.

Oettinger: Before you move on, taking doctrine and so on and your previous comments which related more to money, let me play the devil's advocate and say the money side is just a bunch of gung ho romantics with their Beltway bandit sycophants, and so on, trying to feather their nest. The doctrinal thing is just, again, sort of a macho, romantic, maverick kind of thing which is of no particular consequence. The battle line would not be drawn on the basis that this is really just a sordid fight over money. It's going to be a matter of principle, and the principles involved here are, of course, heretical principles.

Kingston: But doctrine is what we operate on. That's one of the problems with low intensity conflict. Nobody can define it. And we like to put definitions down on a piece of paper so we can say, "That's what we're supporting." The doctrine is how you're going to go to war, how you're going to train to go to war, and the principles involved. Then you get from doctrine down to strategy and tactics.

Oettinger: So what the services are doing is not good enough.

Kingston: In the past, Congress didn't think so. Maybe that's why we got this.

Snyder: On the doctrine thing, I was surprised in the earlier wiring diagram (figure 1) of the SOCOM headquarters where you had all the J numbers, and J-7 was missing. J-7 is now the agency on the Joint Staff for doctrine, and you're emphasizing the fact that he's going to have to put in a J-7 slot.

Kingston: That's right. Right now it's in the special activities group. I assume he's going to do that as a formal J-7, seeing the Joint Staff has.

Snyder: I would think so. That's the way you get along with the folks.

Croke: Much is made of the training. Where is operational test and evaluation included?

Kingston: We'll get to that, but SOCOM is also responsible for the SOF-peculiar equipment reports and the unit evaluation reports. Again, that's done by the services — the Army special forces command, and special operations command at Bragg, the 23rd Air Force at Hurlburt, and the Navy SEALs (Sea-Air-Land teams), they're both on the Atlantic and Pacific coasts.

Croke: The things I was thinking of are the kinds of operations that they have out of Kirtland that are joint sort of counter actions and deception, or the Joint Electronic Warfare Center down in San Antonio. Those represent skill centers that try to be "joint" in dealing with threat, dealing with testing levels in as near an operational environment as you can invent. I would have thought that that would have been an important part of this new responsibility.

Kingston: There's nothing in writing, but I assume, like you, that he's going to tap into those, probably through service components or the services.

Croke: But why aren't they under him, or better connected to him, the same way some of the training centers are? They already have at least that one virtue: they're already thinking joint or trying to.

Kingston: But also, eventually that may come under it. I think they just haven't thought it out that far. He's trying to put a headquarters together down there out of what REDCOM left him.

Croke: In the way of resources you'd go for those that already identify with the new command. It's

like picking up a game in the back yard. You pick up with people even if the relationship is formed on stupid biases. Let's get all the five-foot guys over in this area.

Kingston: I don't think they thought it out that far. But that's a good point.

Croke: They may have resources, after a fashion, already assigned through joint operations. If they're already there, I'd say they're mine. Nobody else wants it anyhow.

Kingston: You know why they were formed. Originally they were formed with a joint staff because they support more than one service.

Croke: They were formed over the objection of the services, too.

Kingston: One of SOCOM's tasks is to conduct specialized courses of instruction for all SOF. That means reviewing current courses for compatibility and duplication, exploring eventual integration of SOF schools, and establishing requirements for an intermediate-level joint SOF staff course. He's the only unified commander who's going to have to integrate schools. The services heretofore had been responsible for that training.

Croke: What about things like the language schools?

Kingston: They need it more than anybody else, but right now it's still unclear. Bragg has their own, of course. But the Defense Language School is Defense, out in Monterey.

Croke: There's Monterey, but there's also the Air Force effort to put all the joint training down in Texas. Their language school is supposed to be for intelligence people.

Kingston: We've got one at Bragg. They're going to have to look at all this.

Croke: Language is a very important part of this.

Kingston: That's why we try to leave the special forces in the group as long as we can, because they're area-oriented. You put a guy in one group and he's speaking Swahili, and the next time he's trying to learn German, and then you put him back to Urdu or something, and the guy's got a problem.

When I was with the British Airborne, I went into the mess one Saturday, and here's a bunch of officers sitting around learning Swahili, and Urdu, and all that. I said, "What are you doing that for?" They said, "We get a stipend for learning a foreign language." I came back, wrote that up and have since then been pushing for that. Just last year the

military said, "You will get \$150, depending on the difficulty of the language."

We take a soldier and we give him three weeks' airborne training. As long as he jumps out of a plane we pay him. In the past, we've been giving people master's degrees, one-year language training, three years in a country, and when he comes home, he's the adjutant at Camp Swampy, and he loses all that very rapidly because it's a perishable skill.

Another responsibility of SOCOM is to train assigned forces and ensure interoperability of equipment and forces. This has two dimensions: SOF-SOF and SOF-conventional. They have to be trained to the CINCs' wartime requirements. The CINCSOC's exercise program must be integrated with and complement other CINC exercises, and feedback from overseas and other CINC exercises is critical. General Lindsay tells me that he's going to piggyback on existing exercises that the regional CINCs now have, but build up the special ops play in those exercises.

Croke: Which ones is he thinking about? Does he have a list of what kinds he wants to piggyback on, or does it come in all flavors?

Kingston: Well, he's talking the big ones like the Flintlock series and the Bright Star series, those types. This bill also directed for the first time that the SOF command of Europe and the Pacific be commanded by general officers, or flag officers. They'd always been captains or colonels. In those two specific commands — Pacific and European commands — the SOF commanders will be generals or flag officers.

Another task is to monitor the preparedness of SOF assigned to the other unified commands. They monitor SORTS (status of resources and training systems) — SOF-peculiar, and of course the unit reps. They also are to conduct ongoing capabilities assessments, and set up a preparedness evaluation system and an annual assessment of SOF capabilities to meet base requirements.

They must also monitor the promotions, assignments, retention, training, and professional development of all SOF personnel. This means monitoring, not usurping, the services' legislated responsibilities, and making the most effective use of expensive, finite assets worldwide. SOCOM is currently tasked to review manpower requirements for the entire SOF community. Again, he intends to do this through his component service commanders, and of course, he does it with the 572 people on his staff.

Each service on a joint command has the senior man on that service — not the CINC — in charge of the Army element, in charge of the Navy element, in charge of the Air Force element, general court martials, that type of business. That business stays in service channels.

Oettinger: How much of the language here is Lindsay-directed, command-directed, and how much is out of the legislation?

Kingston: This is out of the legislation. It's all in there. This act is 100 pages long. That's all. Which isn't bad for a law.

Oettinger: So these are all excerpts from those amendments?

Kingston: Yes. Again, Program 11 calls for the Secretary of Defense to create a separate major Force Program for Special Operations under the Five-Year Defense Plan. The Assistant Secretary of Defense for SO/LIC and the Commander of the U.S. Special Operations Command must jointly prepare program recommendations and budget proposals. Reprogramming or revision of programs and budgets is approved by Congress and exercised only by the Secretary of Defense after consulting the SOCOM Commander. This is probably the biggest contention that he's got with the services right here, because you're talking funding.

Student: It says, "after consultation with the SOCOM Commander." Does that mean he's got to sign on to this? I can imagine the Secretary calling him in and saying, "We're going to reprogram the funds, what do you have to say?"

Kingston: He'll tell him what he thinks, as all CINCs do. But "with consultation" means just what it says. This man has a responsibility, if he doesn't like what the Secretary is telling him, to tell him why he doesn't like it, and then if he's overruled, it's too bad. But he's on record then as saying, "That's dumb," politely.

The SOF forces in the continental United States are all programmed like the rest of the forces to reinforce the regional CINCs. He must know where in the CINC's war plans these forces fit in, and it's up to him to get them ready to go. It is now the transportation command's job — it used to be REDCOM's job — to physically get them from the continental United States over to the other regional CINCs' locations. But the regional CINC and his plans will tell you the sequence of flow of the forces, and what airfields or ports he wants them in, and in what sequence.

Student: I'm curious: Since most of these missions of special ops are time sensitive, is there an informal or formal mechanism to inform key congressional leaders?

Kingston: That is done by the Chairman and the Secretary.

Student: So there is an informal structure?

Kingston: There is a mechanism and it's exercised. In many cases, we have to inform foreign governments, in some cases, for overflight rights and the like. We may or may not tell them what we're doing with those forces.

Student: Obviously, the initiative for a mission comes from a variety of areas, and I suspect the CIA have their role in initiating that sort of thing. How does this Special Operations Command or the Deputy Assistant Secretary for Special Operations over at the NSC fit in with the various motivations by the intelligence agencies?

Kingston: It's at the DOD, not NSC. Most of the missions are probably generated from the NSC, but the Assistant Secretary is in the Department of Defense.

Student: What I was also speaking to is North's initiative on the Iran-Contra affair, and there were other initiatives. There's been the arms-for-hostages deal that involved, or I think involved, SOF.

Kingston: I don't know of any military forces that were alerted for that. Another governmental agency was associated with support to the Contras.

Croke: I think that what he's asking, General, is how the right hand or left hand is going to know in some of these operations that are carried on in such a compartmentized fashion....

Kingston: The CINCs have legitimate responsibilities, because if something goes down they want to know about it. Also, they may have to go out and explain to a lot of foreign countries in the area why something was going on that they didn't know about, or we didn't inform them about.

Croke: That's the obvious answer, but I can envision cases where you have two compartmented operations going on in the same region, and they wouldn't necessarily say everything about what they were doing.

Kingston: That has happened in the past, and we've had problems with it. And we've had both in some cases military operations, not just governmental.

Croke: This will maybe help solve the DOD internal problems, at least bring them into better focus, but it won't help some of the others.

Kingston: Some of the others we don't know about. People get hurt in some of these cases, too.

Student: Obviously, many of these are time-sensitive missions, and in many of them you don't want the press to be publishing what you're going to do before you do it.

Kingston: And sometimes afterwards, too.

Student: When's the distinction made when it should be done by the military versus the CIA?

Kingston: It's probably decided at the NSC level.

Oettinger: Let me go back to a point that General Kingston made earlier, during a previous presentation. One of the factors which is invisible in all of this presentation, and earlier, is that the War Powers Act on the one hand limits the President, or at least puts on him certain requirements vis-à-vis the Congress, that apply if what is happening is labeled a military action. A bunch of legislation going back to the post-Watergate era, and presidential directives that follow that, limit what can be done under the intelligence rubric. So one of the paramount questions that faces anyone sitting at the White House or Chairman level is, where in the United States government, or outside, do you place the responsibility for executing all of this? At the level of the President, National Security Council, Secretary of Defense, Chairman of the Joint Chiefs, or the Director of Central Intelligence? That to my mind remains a key question. It's a very murky area in terms of wherein lies what authority to use what part of the government for which kind of activity. And the fact is that folks can get into trouble for that. There are a couple of people now who are going to be testing that in the courts over the next couple of years.

How that gets resolved is a critical element in terms of this balance between excessive tying of the hands, as one view might take it, or excessive license without adequate control by the responsible political body, which is another viewpoint. That's an absolutely central problem and there are people whose livelihoods, honor, etc., etc., are resting on it. Usually you can call them knaves, or you can call them heroes, but there's one hell of a big gray area in all of this which is not adequately looked at or understood, and none of our speakers has addressed it. It's a critical element.

Kingston: It's very critical when you've got appointed officials who may be great at running some big company, but they don't know their ass from

second base trying to get involved in this, and they think that they're experts and they're devious and they believe they can do all this sort of business. They don't know what the hell they're playing with in some cases. You try to educate them.

Student: Whom should they look to for help with that?

Kingston: The executors have to do that — the guys they give the responsibility to. But all of these missions have to be supported by adequate, timely intelligence. There are more special ops failures than there are successes. If you go into it realizing that, then you're mentally going to be all right. I don't mean you go in thinking it's going to fail, but if it does fail, you'd better find out why it failed.

Student: How is that issue of constitutionality reconciled, then? If a mission is couched under the authority of the CIA, that's never really known because these special ops could be sent on "operations" that wouldn't fall under time limitations and the War Powers or anything of that sort. So how do they resolve that issue?

Kingston: With military personnel we used to be able to do what we called "sheep dipping" when I was with CIA. I was still a serving military officer working for CIA under station chief leadership. That didn't bother me at all, if we're going to pass forces that way. We've got the national intelligence officers for land forces and that type, but we don't have the number now working that we once did have.

Oettinger: I would give my eye teeth for several of you with the right backgrounds to look at this problem because I don't think it's being looked at. I don't think it's being understood.

Student: I'm in an international law class at Fletcher and that's exactly what we're studying: the whole notion of the War Powers resolution under the United States vs. Curtis Wright case in 1936 in which it came out how you reconciled that, given today's context in the use of special forces.

Kingston: The reason other countries, including England, can do this so easily is that they don't have a Bill of Rights and they don't have a First Amendment.

Croke: They don't have to worry so much about the plausibility of defensible actions.

Kingston: They just say it's too bad. A lot of it is on the "old boy net." Every once in a while you'll read in the paper, *The London Times*, Sergeant

so-and-so, or Captain so-and-so, SAS, killed in operations.

Student: That was the French reaction to the *Greenpeace* affair where their people were being gunned. The government reaction was so totally different from our reaction.

Kingston: Getting back to the role of special forces, they are unconventional warfare experts. Their primary mission is guerrilla warfare. They must be area oriented and language qualified. Special forces often conduct long-term campaigns that are strategic in nature, and their secondary roles include direct action, strategic reconnaissance, and foreign internal defense. They must be able to infiltrate or exfiltrate an area by land, air, or sea.

By contrast, Rangers are special light infantry. They conduct overt "strike" operations — raids, ambushes, and recovery operations, and seizure of key facilities including points of entry. They support conventional or special operations in activities that have objectives of strategic or operational significance. Their orientation is worldwide, and they are capable in both airborne and amphibious operations. We can't get involved in training foreign police forces. Congress took that away from us after Vietnam. We do have other agencies that do that. The special forces have the mission of strategic raids, but they would prefer not to do it because that's just the type of professionals they are. They could do it, but the Rangers were specifically created for these types of reasons.

Psyops and civil affairs are predominantly Army reserve components. There's one active U.S. psyops group, and one active civil affairs battalion. The majority of their tasks are in support of the regional CINCs' conventional war plans, but there is a significant low intensity conflict (LIC) application and there is a unique relationship with SOF. Psyops, civil affairs, and special operations are separate, but have related mission areas. There is a separate SOCOM staff directorate to oversee psyops/civil affairs matters. Now, the 4th Psyops Group at Bragg has additional nationally directed and OSD-directed missions. I had these units when I was in command of the JFK Center down there.

The Air Force special operations group is a Psyops Air Wing in the Pennsylvania National Guard. The psyops are mostly a reserve component. The Army has only one active brigade.

Student: I'm afraid I still don't understand what psyops means.

Kingston: They're psychological operations battalions. Each company has different missions. They

cover printing, media, and loudspeakers from aircraft and on the ground. Psychological warfare gets into some of the areas that can be used for both tactical and strategic deception, that type of business. These people are pretty smart. These detachments do a lot of good work.

Croke: Also, if you're talking about what goes into Program 11, they have items that are unique, and that none of the services can touch.

Kingston: They would get involved very early on in low intensity conflict. They're nonshooters. They do mind control and manipulation of public opinion — that type of business.

Croke: These are almost all totally reserves?

Kingston: There's one group — the 4th Psyops Group at Bragg — and one civil affairs battalion, the 96th at Bragg. All the rest of them are in the reserve forces. They have aircraft that can fly so high you can't even hear them, but you can get the message on the ground. You don't know where it's coming from. Their loudspeakers are that good.

Student: How big are some of these groups?

Kingston: The psyops group probably has — a rough guess now, I used to know exactly — about 4,000 people.

Croke: The 23rd has the search and rescue missions in addition to their ordinary assignments.

Kingston: Over 50 percent of the aircraft in the 23rd's Air Force Special Ops Force are non-special ops missions.

Croke: The one mission that is close to special ops is search and rescue. If you're talking about heroes, they're among the best.

Kingston: We had a MEDIVAC helicopter pilot who won a Medal of Honor in Vietnam. I'm trying to change that to combat search and rescue.

Croke: I was only thinking about combat. That's the only one I know that has people out there, from the relationship they had going in Vietnam and other theaters.

Kingston: But they still have that mission for the Air Force.

Croke: You don't want to separate the combat search and rescue mission from the 23rd Air Force, do you?

Kingston: Yes. Again, it's a combat operation that supports the ground and air commanders. You don't

really need SOF. You don't need a Pave Low* for something like that.

Croke: Maybe we're not short on heroes, but we are short on talent.

Kingston: The Air Force has debated this since they started flying: where to put combat search and rescue. I think they got in the 23rd, again like the psyops and civil affairs got in at Bragg, because they were there on location. When they moved down to Hurlburt, they moved them down and kept the mission with them.

In terms of equipment, the MC-130 is a combat Taion aircraft. The AC-130 is the gunship. The Talon has a huge fork in the front of the aircraft, and it has the capability of picking up a man on a rope with a balloon on the upper end of the rope. The MC-130 snatches him and brings him back in under the aircraft, in the back door of the aircraft.

The Naval special warfare forces are unique. The SDV, the SEAL delivery vehicle, is very sophisticated — you fly it, and the original one had aircraft instruments on it. It's full of water. You're operating under water. One of the most difficult things they have is trying to keep a map of the bottom terrain so they know where they're going.

Student: What does direct action mean?

Kingston: You physically go after a target.

Student: As opposed to what?

Kingston: Reconnaissance or something else. This is where you go in and knock out somebody or something.

In 1950 we had what was called the Lodge Bill. It said that foreigners could come in and serve five years in the United States Army, and then they would get U.S. citizenship. A lot of those people came in, went in the special forces, and some graduated or retired as lieutenant colonels and colonels. It was very good at that time if we had to go back into Eastern Europe. But now they've solidified so much internally that there's no chance of putting any of our people back in there at the same level that they came out of the Eastern European countries. We'd have difficulty now doing it.

Direct action means strike or commando-type operations with a short-term, direct approach in pursuit of a single objective of operational or strategic significance. It includes attack or seizure of key facilities, personnel, and equipment, as well as recovery

*Pave Low is a joint Army/Air Force effort to improve capabilities for recovering downed airmen.

of personnel and equipment. It is conducted primarily by small, specially trained regular units.

Strategic reconnaissance, which is performed only by special operations forces, requires deep penetration beyond the corps area, and may require early insertion. These activities are often of extended duration — 30 to 90 days — or may be of short duration for target acquisition missions.

Foreign internal defense is performed by both conventional and special forces. It involves supplying military assistance and mobile training teams, and ranges from security assistance to disaster relief. It's a long-term activity that requires a consistent approach, as well as language and cultural expertise.

Student: What provisions have you made, or does this bill make, for coordinating with other countries that we might want to help with internal defense?

Kingston: We'd have to be invited in first. Coordination externally is not there, but the unified commander will do the coordination with the countries that invite us in. The State Department gets very much involved in this.

Student: Is this a country team idea?

Student: Who will command their forces?

Kingston: They will. We're not going in to command. We're going in to instruct, mostly. We don't put our forces under foreign commanders.

As I mentioned before, psyops and civil affairs are separate mission areas that require forces specifically organized, trained, and equipped to conduct them. They may support special operations; because they have particular utility in low intensity conflict, they have a unique relationship with SOF. They also support conventional forces and other government agencies in low intensity conflict.

Student: Does psyops also include interrogation of any sort?

Kingston: We have what we call, in support of our military units, POW interrogation teams.

Student: Isn't it governed under the Geneva Convention?

Kingston: Yes. We have linguists who serve on these teams.

Student: So, in essence you're operating under the rules of conduct of war, even though there's no declared war?

Kingston: We didn't have a declared war in Korea. We didn't have a declared war in Vietnam that

I know of. We still operate under the rules of land warfare as constituted by our government.

Student: That's why they're now called the Rules of Armed Conflict. Declaring war has gone out of style.

Kingston: You just go fight. Low intensity conflict often includes a conflict environment that is limited in geographic size and constrained in the level of violence. This is the type of warfare characterized by "unconventional" forces and "special" operations. But it requires extensive involvement of conventional "nation building" forces, such as engineers, civil affairs, and medics, and the military is only a small part of the total picture. This last is very important in low intensity conflict.

Low intensity conflict is not only environmental, it's also regional. If you go to a big country, you may have different types of low intensity conflict in different regions. It's an environment where we have to task-organize our help. You get AID (the Agency for International Development), you get Agriculture, you may get Commerce, obviously you'll get State involved, CIA, and maybe some military. But military — if we can get it fast enough and get invited in fast enough — should be engineering, road building, helping with equipment, that type of help.

Oettinger: These are only examples, but missing there is something like police.

Kingston: The U.S. military is not allowed to do it, but AID can do that and they did it. We bring people back to the International Police School here on our funds in some cases.

Student: It is ironic that you can train foreign military forces that are invited, but not civilian police.

Kingston: The U.S. military cannot train another country's police force.

Oettinger: But you can train military engineers?

Kingston: Yes. We have other governmental agencies that train police forces.

What the military could do in LIC includes security assistance, foreign internal defense, insurgency (support of freedom fighters) and counter-insurgency, show of force, peacekeeping, countering terrorism, contingency operations, humanitarian, and counter-narcotics.

McLaughlin: The law was triggered sometime during the Vietnam war. I think it involved Michigan State University and a number of places who were intermediate agencies in this.

Kingston: They've got one of the best police schools.

McLaughlin: They were teaching the people staffing the tiger cages out on the island and other things. I forget the details.

As you went through your various functions, you seemed to hit most of the obvious ones in terms of support of unconventional warfare being the special forces and the Rangers or SEALs who are uniformed behind-the-lines operations and presumably do special missions, anti-terrorism, hostage rescue, and psyops and civil affairs. Does it ever talk to covert offensive operations? Maybe à la Spetsnaz?

Kingston: Yes, it does, but not here. On counter-narcotics, DOD is now assisting and supporting the DEA plus the Coast Guard. The Coast Guard has, in some cases, arrest authority. The U.S. military is supporting them with aircraft, personnel, and ships.

Student: Is that considered a good duty or a bad duty?

Kingston: The service chiefs will tell you it degrades their readiness training, and I will tell you it's probably some of the best training they're going to get in peacetime, if you work with these people based on proper intelligence for interdiction of the traffickers. If you talk to the operators, they like it. It's better than going on an exercise.

Student: So you would favor more military use against drug smuggling.

Kingston: I would. Again, supported by proper intelligence.

Student: What about using some of our 600-ship Navy to cut off boats coming up here?

Kingston: They're doing it. But there, again, do you know how many boats there are in the Caribbean?

Student: We've set up hot lines so that if a boat is intercepted we can go right back and get the authority of the country to search or seize it. The Coast Guard is doing a lot of that, and the Navy is doing some of it.

McLaughlin: You mentioned earlier on what I thought was a criticism of the reorganization bill in setting up the separate command, and I'm not sure that's accurate.

Kingston: I think the command should be set up.

McLaughlin: You mentioned the problem that officers should only be in for a while and then go back into the service. Does that present the same

problem that we had pre-1986 with joint service officers?

Kingston: My initial joint service was the Joint Advisory Commission, Korea. It sounds great. I was doing waterborne raids with a bunch of Koreans up north. I didn't learn a damn thing about joint staff. I learned how to run small boats. I learned and taught how to do beach reconnaissance, scuba, and night waterborne raids, and rendezvous at sea with the Navy for naval gunfire. My second joint assignment was when I set up the Joint Casualty Resolution Center in January 1973 and the Central Identification Laboratory, when I was a general officer. Those were the only two joint assignments I'd had, though I had been to the National War College. Not a damn thing to do with joint service, although they're all joint services.

McLaughlin: What I'm saying is one of the reasons underlying a lot of the language of the 1986 reorganization act was the congressional perception or understanding, based on live testimony, that officers serving on joint staffs suffered for the experience or that you did not attract the best caliber officers.

Kingston: That's correct, in some cases. Yet the Joint Staff can select and turn down an officer. They have pretty good ones there. But out in the unified commands and other joint commands, they may have some problems.

McLaughlin: Will it continue to be potentially injurious or harmful to junior officers — commander, captain, major, whatever — to go off and play special operations for three or four years, and is that going to preclude his promotion to flag officer rank ten years down the road?

Kingston: If he's in special forces, it has been a hindrance to a lot of people who spent too long a time there. If you notice, I always went to war first as an infantryman. I landed at Inchon with the 7th Division. The second time back to Korea I was in special ops. In Vietnam I commanded a U.S. infantry battalion for nine months, then SOG (the Special Operations Group).

Oettinger: So if you punch your ticket right in the first place, then you can afford to play. It's like in academe.

Student: So some of my friends are wrong in thinking that they're going into this new special ops command and now they can have a bright career ahead of them with the reorganization?

Kingston: I didn't say that. If you look at the career of a guy who's going to be selected for general or flag, he's usually recognized as an outstanding officer as a major, or as a lieutenant colonel, before somebody thinks he may make it. But if you're going to have three and a half consecutive years of joint staff, where are the commands, and where are the other functions that he's got to do for his service? The joint services do not promote anybody. It is the services that promote their officers to every rank. General Lindsay's got a peculiar job there. He is told to monitor, and he's going to do that through his component commanders. I would imagine the Army would get quite upset, as the other services would, if some Air Force officer came over and said, "I want Colonel So-and-So promoted to general rank." You know what he'd get for an answer. The poor guy would be hung right there.

USSOCOM has many roles in low intensity conflict. They give advice to the National Command Authority and the regional CINCs on special operations; act as the focal point for developing the types of forces, tactics, and equipment needed in low intensity conflict; provide a tailored force package to meet the requirements of the regional CINCs; and must be prepared to plan and carry out special operations, if ordered to do so. In the current U.S. approach, the armed forces are structured, trained, and equipped for general war, and SOF are no exception. They are oriented to unconventional or guerrilla warfare and direct action/strike/commando types of operations. In addition, their inherent capabilities are applied to situations short of war.

Student: Regarding SOCOM's roles in low intensity conflict, one of the other responsibilities mentioned, particularly when you talked about situations that are beginning to develop where SOF might be needed, is, who takes the responsibility of planning out way ahead of time? For example, in Panama, people are beginning to say that something might happen. Disturbingly enough, I read that they're talking about options like kidnapping Noriega. I don't want to hear about that yet. I want it just to happen.

Kingston: I was kind of surprised to hear that myself. We have established in this government that we will not support the overthrow of friendly governments. Panama is still friendly to us.

Student: There's a technicality because he's not actually the leader of the government. Would they come to these people and say plan out or review?

Kingston: That's a combination of what we have an intelligence agency for, what the State Department does in the particular countries, what the regional desks of the assistant secretaries do, and the CINC. They should all be doing that. Someone is not doing it well, obviously.

SOF capabilities are directly applicable to insurgency — support of freedom fighters, shows of force and peacekeeping, counter-terrorism, and contingency operations. Like other military forces, they may also support humanitarian assistance and counter-narcotics operations.

Student: Whose definition is this?

Kingston: That's theirs. That's SOCOM. And OSD goes along with it.

Oettinger: I'd like your reading of what's happening now with the implementation of these amendments. You were saying the Congress expressed its will in passing these things, perhaps somewhat clumsily, either intentionally or inadvertently, for example, in not informing Mr. Marsh of his added responsibility.

Kingston: I've been told they did that intentionally, because he asked them.

Oettinger: They did that intentionally. So in a sense then, the Congress acted, but somewhat halfheartedly.

McLaughlin: How can you call what they did halfhearted?

Kingston: They didn't enforce it.

Oettinger: That's right. Congress passes this law. But one perceives reluctance in the Executive Branch in compliance.

Kingston: At least they've institutionalized it now with the command, and the Army has institutionalized it by making it a branch.

Oettinger: But that may be a drag by virtue of its being so visible and, therefore, more easily assassinated in the budget battles than it was before.

Kingston: That's one of the reasons I was against forming the branch of special forces in the Army.

Oettinger: On the other hand, you're saying now that it's a fait accompli you like it.

Kingston: No. I never did like that. I like the command being formed, but not the branch within the Army, because I think it's going to hurt a lot of officers. They will not reach their full potential, particularly in the combat arms. You've still got your support people, your logisticians, your medics,

you've got your chaplains, and they all come up through their own branch.

Oettinger: That branch got formed by the result of the legislation?

Kingston: No. The Army formed it. This has nothing to do with the legislation.

Oettinger: So, the Army did that in a fit of sabotage?

Kingston: I have no idea. A colonel and two lieutenant colonels came to me one day and said, "We have instructions from the Chief of Staff of the Army to brief you on this." When it was all through they said, "Now we know we can count on your support." I said, "You can count on me to tell the Chief of Staff of the Army this is the dumbest God damn idea I've seen in a long time."

Oettinger: So your interpretation is that that's killing with kindness.

Kingston: It's the wrong thing to do. You're going to have a lot of guys with no place to go when they're lieutenant colonels, and there's no place to promote them.

Student: It's like intelligence.

Kingston: Or if you promote him, where are you going to put him? Nobody will want him.

Oettinger: You're saying that the command itself is an asset because among other things it does no harm to officers who can rotate through it and still have a place to go, mainly other standard billets of a type that are promotable.

Kingston: That's right, but I think the three and a half year consecutive joint duty will have to be changed. I don't know to what. I would say two years or three and a half years, but not consecutive. Because you just don't have that number of years to do it.

Student: It's being relaxed for combat arms to two years.

Kingston: It is? That's good. Here, again, if the congressmen would come over to the Pentagon and talk to somebody before they made stipulations like that, they could find out what's wrong with it. But you've got the staffers doing the talking and if you've dealt with some of the congressional staffers, some are fine and some are not so fine.

McLaughlin: In fact, we had the account recently by one of the Senate staffers of Marsh being named as acting Assistant Secretary and the attempt to en-

force the intention with the explanation that they were afraid of that being called too much more micromanagement.

Kingston: And, also, Mr. Marsh has other things to do. Being the Secretary of the Army, he just can't sit back and pick his nose, I hope.

McLaughlin: Well, the intention was that this might bring sufficient pressure on OSD to appoint a real candidate.

Kingston: Well, Charlie Whitehouse's nomination has been over there now for at least a month. I'm not sure they're going to do anything in this administration with that.

Student: Would you make clear something that I think is obvious? My question is predicated on the idea that there's somebody's third law which is: power can neither be created nor destroyed, and therefore if all this power is pulled together in SOCOM, special forces, where did it come from? Who now has less power than they used to have?

Kingston: The services.

Croke: You're talking about a different kind of command, the one that worries Bob Herres. Herres is worried about a fifth service-type organization being formed. You don't see it that way in your view. He sees this command taking away billets and slots.

Kingston: They've got to take them away from some place, from the services.

Student: Service people will hold them, but the services won't control them.

Croke: Most of the time, it's almost an ad hoc command. People come in for a certain period....

Kingston: They do. Two or three years, and that's it.

Oettinger: But what Herres was focusing on, I think, Jim, was the acquisition and procurement, etc., which are service-like.

Kingston: But General Lindsay is going to have it for SOF-peculiar items.

Croke: If we can't agree on what a low intensity conflict is....

Kingston: Is a combat Talon a SOF-peculiar item? Some people think it is. Some of the Air Force people say, "Hell, no, it flies."

Croke: If I had to take on Talon II in its present configuration, I'd say, "You can have her, Air Force."

Oettinger: Definitions are logic chopping after the fact, or presumption building before the fact or something, and they tend to follow the real distribution of power. I'm back again to whoever asked this question of gain or loss. Is your sense that this setup now with the new command — never mind a definitive definition of low intensity conflict, etc., etc., — in terms of a career where we've been part-time mainstream and part-time maverick and so on, netting it out, does that give a little bit more muscle to the mavericks versus the mainliners?

Kingston: I don't think it gives any more to them at all.

McLaughlin: But isn't that a discouraging conclusion to come to? That people with these skills cannot make it to the top any more?

Kingston: First of all, the special forces branch acquisition of officers is in at the captain level. That means he's got to have gone through his branch school. If he comes out of the branch school, and says I'm going to go to special ops, you know what kind of reception he's going to get from the branch.

Oettinger: Well, we are at the end. Bob, thank you so very much.