

~~TOP SECRET~~

FINAL REPORT
OF THE
SPECIAL OPERATIONS REVIEW GROUP

JULY 1980

~~CLASSIFIED BY 6805~~
~~EXEMPTED ON 23 OCT 80 0000~~
~~EXEMPTED BY 6100~~
~~REF ID: A6200-12, PARAS F2-30267, 640~~

~~EXEMPTED FROM AUTOMATIC DOWNGRADING AND DECLASSIFICATION~~
~~EXEMPTED BY 6100~~

~~TOP SECRET~~

FORWARDING STATEMENT

It is essential that the purpose of this report be clearly understood: It is a professional critique of the Iranian hostage rescue operation addressed to the Joint Chiefs of Staff. It is not, and should not be read as, an after-action summary, or as a white paper examining the Iranian hostage crisis at the national level. It is much too narrow and technical a report for this latter application. Except for some discussions with the Central Intelligence Agency, the review was confined to activities and persons within the Department of Defense. There was no attempt in this report to assess the events leading up to the seizure of the Embassy, the concurrent international political environment, or the ongoing efforts to secure the release of the hostages by negotiations or diplomatic means.

By its nature, therefore, this report will appear to be highly critical, more so probably than a wider review from a national perspective would deserve. But to be useful, a critique such as this must not allow any potential area of possible future improvement to go unquestioned. For this reason, a number of the issues analyzed that were evaluated as having no bearing on the success or failure of the actual mission are included in this report. The reason is that they might very well have an application for some future special operation conducted under different circumstances.

Further, it must be realized that much of the critical character of the discussions contained in the analysis is the product of hindsight. For example, the statistical evidence available to the planners of the operation may have been persuasive that eight helicopters were the best compromise between operations security and equipment redundancy, but an after-the-fact investigation is virtually obligated to assemble fresh data which will reveal why eight was too low a number.

The members of the review group are unanimous in the view that the issues treated in the analyses were valid concerns, and we believe that a full discussion of these issues was necessary to provide the rationale for our conclusions and support for the recommendations.

We are, nevertheless, apprehensive that the critical tone of our discussions could be misinterpreted as an indictment of the able and brave men who planned and executed this operation. We encountered not a shred of evidence of culpable neglect or incompetence.

26 Aug 71

UNCLASSIFIED

(u) The facts are that, in the conduct of this review, we have seen infinitely more to be proud of than to complain about. The American servicemen who participated in this mission--planner, crewman, or trooper--deserved to have a successful outcome. It was the ability, dedication, and enthusiasm of those people who made what everyone thought was an impossibility into what should have been a success.

(u) Finally, we were often reminded that only the United States military, alone in the world, had the ability to accomplish what the United States planned to do. It was risky and we knew it, but it had a good chance of success and America had the courage to try.

J. L. Holloway ^{FA}

J. L. HOLLOWAY III
Admiral, US Navy (Ret.)
Chairman

Special Operations Review Group

UNCLASSIFIED

UNCLASSIFIED

Special Operations Review Group
Washington D.C. 20301

23 July 1980

MEMORANDUM FOR THE JOINT CHIEFS OF STAFF

Subject: Letter of Transmittal

The attached report of the Special Operations Review Group is forwarded in accordance with the Terms of Reference received on 28 May 1980.

The report made use of all source materials. It is submitted with a recommended TOP SECRET security classification subject to further review for confirmation by the appropriate Joint Staff authorities.

Without attachment, this memorandum is UNCLASSIFIED.

J. L. Holloway ^{FA}
J.L. HOLLOWAY III
Admiral, USN (Ret.)
Chairman, Special Operations
Review Group

UNCLASSIFIED

CONTENTS

	Page
(U) Executive Summary	iv
<hr/>	
CHAPTER I INTRODUCTION (U)	1
(U) Special Operations Review Group	2
(U) Investigative Procedures	3
CHAPTER II CHRONOLOGY (U)	7
(U) Background	7
(U) Initial Planning	8
(U) Initial Training in the Desert	11
(U) Christmas Break	13
(TS) The [REDACTED]	13
(TS) The Fourth Joint Training Exercise, [REDACTED]	15
(TS) Desert One [REDACTED]	15
(U) The Countdown	17
(U) Execution and Abort	17
CHAPTER III ISSUE ANALYSIS (U)	21
(U) Preface	21
Issue 1 (U) OPSEC	24
Issue 2 (U) Organization, Command and Control	26
Issue 3 (U) Intelligence	31
Issue 4 (U) Plan Review	35
Issue 5 (U) Readiness Evaluation	37
Issue 6 (U) Joint Training	39
Issue 7 (U) Alterations in JTF Composition	41
Issue 8 (U) Risk Assessment of Hostile SIGINT	43
Issue 9 (U) Abort Criteria	47
Issue 10 (U) Other Helicopters	50
Issue 11 (U) Helicopter Force Size	52
Issue 12 (U) Helicopter Pilots	56

172
1-2
Plans,
Plan
vulnerabilities

(b)(1)(a)
(b)(1)(a)

	Page
Issue 13 (U) Helicopter Unit	58
Issue 14 (U) Dust Phenomenon	60
Issue 15 (U) Weather Reconnaissance	63
Issue 16 (U) C-130 Pathfinders	65
Issue 17 (U) Helicopter Aborts	68
Issue 18 (U) Radar Threat	71
Issue 19 (U) Helicopter Communications	73
Issue 20 (U) Desert One Siting.	75
Issue 21 (U) Command and Control at Desert One	78
Issue 22 (U) Classified Material Safeguard	81
Issue 23 (U) Destruct Devices on Helicopters.	83
 (U) Summary of Major Issues	 85
 CHAPTER IV CONCLUSIONS (U)	 86
(U) Specific Conclusions	86
(U) General Conclusions	90
 CHAPTER V RECOMMENDATIONS (U)	 92
 ANNEXES (U)	
A. (U) Terms of Reference	A-1
B. (U) Biographies of the Special Operations Review Group	B-1
Tab A - (U) Admiral James L. Holloway III, United States Navy (Ret.)	B-2
Tab B - (U) Lieutenant General Samuel V. Wilson, United States Army (Ret.)	B-5
Tab C - (U) Lieutenant General Leroy J. Manor, United States Air Force (Ret.)	B-7
Tab D - (U) Major General James C. Smith, United States Army	B-10
Tab E - (U) Major General John L. Piotrowski, United States Air Force	B-12
Tab F - (U) Major General Alfred M. Gray, Jr., United States Marine Corps	B-15

UNCLASSIFIED

Special Operations Review Group
Washington D.C. 20301

23 July 1980

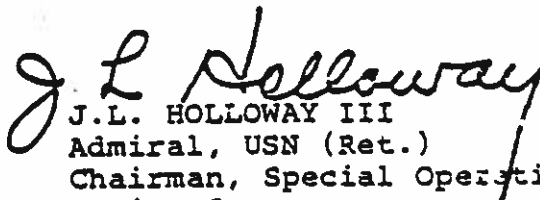
MEMORANDUM FOR THE JOINT CHIEFS OF STAFF

Subject: Letter of Transmittal

The attached report of the Special Operations Review Group is forwarded in accordance with the Terms of Reference received on 28 May 1980.

The report made use of all source materials. It is submitted with a recommended TOP SECRET security classification subject to further review for confirmation by the appropriate Joint Staff authorities.

Without attachment, this memorandum is UNCLASSIFIED.

J. L. Holloway 
J.L. HOLLOWAY III
Admiral, USN (Ret.)
Chairman, Special Operations
Review Group

UNCLASSIFIED

CONTENTS

	Page
(U) Executive Summary	iv
<hr/>	
CHAPTER I INTRODUCTION (U)	1
(U) Special Operations Review Group	2
(U) Investigative Procedures	3
CHAPTER II CHRONOLOGY (U)	7
(U) Background	7
(U) Initial Planning	8
(U) Initial Training in the Desert	11
(U) Christmas Break	13
(TS) The [REDACTED]	13
(TS) The Fourth Joint Training Exercise, [REDACTED]	15
(TS) Desert One [REDACTED]	15
(U) The Countdown	17
(U) Execution and Abort	17
CHAPTER III ISSUE ANALYSIS (U)	21
(U) Preface	21
Issue 1 (U) OPSEC	24
Issue 2 (U) Organization, Command and Control	26
Issue 3 (U) Intelligence	31
Issue 4 (U) Plan Review	35
Issue 5 (U) Readiness Evaluation	37
Issue 6 (U) Joint Training	39
Issue 7 (U) Alterations in JTF Composition	41
Issue 8 (U) Risk Assessment of Hostile SIGINT	43
Issue 9 (U) Abort Criteria	47
Issue 10 (U) Other Helicopters	50
Issue 11 (U) Helicopter Force Size	52
Issue 12 (U) Helicopter Pilots	56

172
1-2
Plans,
Plan
vulnerabilities

(b)(1)(a)
(b)(1)(a)

	Page
Issue 13 (U) Helicopter Unit	58
Issue 14 (U) Dust Phenomenon	60
Issue 15 (U) Weather Reconnaissance	63
Issue 16 (U) C-130 Pathfinders	65
Issue 17 (U) Helicopter Aborts	68
Issue 18 (U) Radar Threat	71
Issue 19 (U) Helicopter Communications	73
Issue 20 (U) Desert One Siting.	75
Issue 21 (U) Command and Control at Desert One	78
Issue 22 (U) Classified Material Safeguard	81
Issue 23 (U) Destruct Devices on Helicopters.	83
(U) Summary of Major Issues	85
CHAPTER IV CONCLUSIONS (U)	86
(U) Specific Conclusions	86
(U) General Conclusions	90
CHAPTER V RECOMMENDATIONS (U)	92
ANNEXES (U)	
A. (U) Terms of Reference	A-1
B. (U) Biographies of the Special Operations Review Group	B-1
Tab A - (U) Admiral James L. Holloway III, United States Navy (Ret.)	B-2
Tab B - (U) Lieutenant General Samuel V. Wilson, United States Army (Ret.)	B-5
Tab C - (U) Lieutenant General Leroy J. Manor, United States Air Force (Ret.)	B-7
Tab D - (U) Major General James C. Smith, United States Army	B-10
Tab E - (U) Major General John L. Piotrowski, United States Air Force	B-12
Tab F - (U) Major General Alfred M. Gray, Jr., United States Marine Corps	B-15

C. (U) Sources of Information C-1

 Tab A - (U) Documents C-2

 Tab B - (U) Interviews C-7

 Tab C - (U) Demonstrations and On-Scene Visits C-9

D. [REDACTED] D-1(b)(1)(e)

E. (U) Helicopter Force Size E-1

 Tab A - (U) JTF Analysis of Helicopter Requirements E-13

 Tab B - (U) Helicopter Reliability Figures, Air Force Studies and Analysis E-20

 Tab C - (U) JTF Helicopter Special Mission Training Plan E-26

F. (U) Glossary F-1

1-2
plans

SPECIAL OPERATIONS REVIEW GROUP
EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Purpose

(U) The purpose of this review is to improve US counter-terrorist (CT) capability through an independent appraisal of the hostage rescue mission, including a broad examination of its planning, organization, coordination, direction, and control. The scope of the study addresses the broader aspects of conceptual validity and operational feasibility; the planning environment, including operations security (OPSEC), policy guidance, and options available; adequacy of planning, resources, preparation, and support; and overall conduct of the executed portion of the mission.

Background

(TS) The use of terrorism as a means of achieving international political goals expanded significantly during the 1970s. In response to this growing threat, the US military became involved in CT activities

[REDACTED]

(b)(1)(a)(1)
(b)(1)(a)(2)

At the time the US Embassy in Tehran was occupied,

[REDACTED] and no unit or joint force had the full capability to undertake a hostage rescue mission in the environment that existed in Tehran.

Mission

(TS) Rescue mission planning was an ongoing process from 4 November 1979 through 23 April 1980. The planners were faced with a continually changing set of circumstances influenced mainly by the uncertain intentions of the hostages' captors and the vacillating positions of the evolving Iranian leadership. The remoteness of Tehran from available bases and the hostile nature of the country further complicated the development of a feasible operational concept and resulted in a relatively slow generation of force readiness.

1-2
primary
capabilities
mission

Analysis

(TS) In analyzing the planning, training, and execution of the hostage rescue mission, the review group identified 23 discrete issues that were investigated in depth. Eleven were considered to be major issues, ones that had an identifiable influence on the outcome of the hostage rescue effort or that should receive the most careful consideration at all levels in planning for any future special operation.

Issues

(U) The major issues, which underlie the subsequent conclusions, are listed below:

(U) OPSEC.

(U) Independent review of plans.

(TS) Organization, command and control, and the applicability of [redacted]

(b)(1)(a)(1)
(b)(1)(a)(2)

1-2
plans,
plan
vulnerabilities

(U) Comprehensive readiness evaluation.

(U) Size of the helicopter force.

(U) Overall coordination of joint training.

(U) Command and control at Desert One.

(U) Centralized and integrated intelligence support external to the Joint Task Force (JTF).

(U) Alternatives to the Desert One site.

(U) Handling the dust phenomenon.

(U) C-130 pathfinders.

Specific Conclusions

(U) The major issues provide the basis for the following specific conclusions:

(TS) The concept of a small clandestine operation was valid and consistent with national policy objectives. It offered the best chance of getting the hostages out alive and the least danger of starting a war with Iran.

(TS) The operation was feasible. It probably represented the plan with the best chance of success under the circumstances, and the decision to execute was justified.

(TS) The rescue mission was a high-risk operation. People and equipment were called on to perform at the upper limits of human capacity and equipment capability.

(TS) The first realistic capability to successfully accomplish the rescue of the hostages was reached at the end of March. Delay was due to lack of reliable intelligence on the location of the hostages; the fluctuating political circumstances; and the time required to organize, plan, equip, and train for the rescue attempt.

(TS) OPSEC was an overriding requirement for a successful operation. Success was totally dependent upon maintaining secrecy [REDACTED]

(b)(1)(a)(1)

1-2
Capabilities

(TS) Command and control was excellent at the upper echelons, but became more tenuous and fragile at intermediate levels. Command relationships below the Commander, JTF, were not clearly emphasized in some cases and were susceptible to misunderstandings under pressure.

(TS) External resources adequately supported the JTF and were not a limiting factor.

(TS) Planning was adequate except for the number of backup helicopters and provisions for weather contingencies. A larger helicopter force and better provisions for weather penetration would have increased the probability of mission success.

(TS) Preparation for the mission was adequate except for the lack of a comprehensive, full-scale training exercise. Operational readiness of the force would have benefited from a full-dress rehearsal, and command and control weaknesses probably would have surfaced and been ironed out.

(TS) Two factors combined to directly cause the mission abort: Unexpected helicopter failure rate and low-visibility flight conditions en route to Desert One.

~~TOP SECRET~~
~~TOP SECRET~~

(TS) The siting of Desert One near a road Probably represented a higher risk than indicated by the JTF assessment.

General Conclusions

(TS) Although the specific conclusions cover a broad range of issues relating to the Terms of Reference, two fundamental concerns emerge in the review group's consensus which are related to most of the major issues:

(TS) The ad hoc nature of the organization and planning. By not utilizing existing JTF organization, the Joint Chiefs of Staff had to start, literally, from the beginning to establish a JTF, create an organization, provide a staff, develop a plan, select the units, and train the force before the first mission capability could be attained. An existing JTF organization, even with a small staff and cadre units, would have provided an organization framework of professional expertise around which a larger tailored force organization could quickly coalesce.

(TS) OPSEC. Many things that, in the opinion of the review group, could have been done to enhance mission success were not done because of OPSEC considerations. The review group considers that most of these alternatives could have been incorporated without an adverse OPSEC impact had there been a more precise OPSEC plan selectively exercised and more closely integrated with an existing JTF organization.

Recommendations

(U) These conclusions lead the group to recommend that:

(TS) A Counterterrorist Joint Task Force (CTJTF) be established as a field agency of the Joint Chiefs of Staff with permanently assigned staff personnel and certain assigned forces.

(TS) The Joint Chiefs of Staff give careful consideration to the establishment of a Special Operations Advisory Panel, comprised of a group of carefully selected high-ranking officers (active and/or retired) who have career backgrounds in special operations or who have served at the CINC or JCS levels and who have maintained a current interest in special operations or defense policy matters.

~~TOP SECRET~~
~~TOP SECRET~~

~~TOP SECRET~~
~~TOP SECRET~~

I. INTRODUCTION

(TS) The Special Operations Review Group was established by the Chairman, Joint Chiefs of Staff (CJCS), at the initiative of the Joint Chiefs of Staff (JCS), for the purpose of providing an independent review of the Iranian hostage rescue operation. The Joint Chiefs of Staff directed the review group to examine the operation in its broadest aspects, including conceptual validity; planning environment, to include policy considerations; and actual mission planning, training, and execution. The Terms of Reference, contained in Annex A, set forth the overall objective of developing recommendations for procedures and organization to be employed by the US Armed Forces in future special operations.

(TS) In order to assure an independent perspective, the membership of the group was constituted from persons not associated with the concept, planning, training, or execution phases of the Iranian rescue operation. Because the group's recommendations were required for development of an improved special operations capability in the immediate future, the group was formed with only experienced military officers. This avoided a long period of technical familiarization, as would be required in the case of civilian members. Additionally, the group's charter--to recommend military organization and procedures to the Joint Chiefs of Staff--made all-military membership particularly appropriate.

(TS) The membership of the group represented all four Services, and the combination of three recently retired and three active duty officers proved a desirable balance. The diverse background of the military officers reflected broad experience in planning and implementation of military operations throughout all echelons, including interactions with the National Command Authorities (NCA). The participation of retired officers should serve to deflect any allegations of the group's being influenced by the Joint Chiefs of Staff. The active duty officers brought to the group an in-depth operational experience and state-of-the-art technical familiarity with special operations, and also contributed essential insights into current Service policies and programs.

(U) The members of the Special Operations Review Group are listed below (complete biographies are contained in Annex B):

~~TOP SECRET~~
~~TOP SECRET~~

~~TOP SECRET~~
~~TOP SECRET~~

(U) Admiral James L. Holloway III, US Navy (Ret.),
Chairman of the Special Operations Review Group

(U) Admiral Holloway, a Naval Aviator, retired as the Chief of Naval Operations in 1978 after 36 years of commissioned service that included combat duty in World War II, Korea, and Vietnam. His service as Chief of Naval Operations and Acting Chairman, Joint Chiefs of Staff, provided familiarity with all levels of command and control, including National Security Council deliberations and Presidential decision making.

(U) Lieutenant General Samuel V. Wilson, US Army (Ret.)

(U) Lieutenant General Wilson, an airborne infantry officer with Special Forces and Ranger background, had combat experience with the World War II Office of Strategic Services and special operations in the China-Burma-India theater. Lieutenant General Wilson's unique intelligence background stems from his assignments as the Deputy to the Director of Central Intelligence (DCI) from 1974 to 1976 and the Director, Defense Intelligence Agency (DIA), from 1976 to 1977.

(U) Lieutenant General Leroy J. Manor, US Air Force (Ret.)

(U) Lieutenant General Manor retired in 1978 after 36 years active service that included several command and staff assignments related to special operations and combat experience in World War II and Vietnam. He was Commander, US Air Force Special Operations Forces, responsible for unit and joint training of all USAF Special Operations Forces. During this assignment, he commanded the joint task force tasked to rescue prisoners of war from the Son Tay prisoner-of-war camp near Hanoi in North Vietnam on 20-21 November 1970. In his final active duty post as Chief of Staff, Pacific Command, he actively developed the command's plans for counterterrorism and supervised the staff role in counterterrorist (CT) exercises.

(U) Major General James C. Smith, US Army

(U) Major General Smith has served over 37 commissioned years in three wars, with special emphasis on command operations and training of armor, air cavalry, and aviation units. As a Master Aviator, he commanded (1976-1978) the Army Aviation Center at Fort Rucker, Alabama, where aviation doctrine and concept are developed. Major General Smith currently serves as the Army's Director of Training, Deputy Chief of Staff for Operations, Department of the Army.

~~TOP SECRET~~
~~TOP SECRET~~

~~TOP SECRET~~
~~TOP SECRET~~

(U) Major General John L. Piotrowski, US Air Force

(U) A pilot and electronic warfare (EW) officer with combat experience in special air warfare and tactical fighter operations, Major General Piotrowski served in the initial cadre of "Jungle Jim," the Air Force's counterinsurgency unit that was activated in April 1961 and that subsequently became the 1st Air Commando Wing. A graduate of the USAF Fighter Weapons School, he participated in tactics development and weapons testing that included introduction of guided weapons into Southeast Asia. His present assignment is Deputy Commander for Air Defense, Tactical Air Command, Peterson AFB, Colorado.

(U) Major General Alfred M. Gray, Jr., US Marine Corps

(U) Major General Gray, a ground officer with command combat experience in infantry, artillery, communications, signals intelligence (SIGINT)/EW, reconnaissance, and special operations units, served in both Korea and Vietnam. He served concurrently as Commanding Officer, 33d Marine Amphibious Unit/Commanding Officer, Regimental Landing Team 4/Deputy Commander, 9th Marine Amphibious Brigade, during the Southeast Asia evacuation operations and was the ground combat element commander during the Saigon extraction. Major General Gray's present assignment is Deputy for Development/Director, Development Center, for the Marine Corps Development and Education Command, Quantico, Virginia.

(U) The group's approach to the review involved the following steps during the investigative phase:

(U) The group reviewed all pertinent written documentation, including planning documents, training reports, mission debriefs, congressional testimony, media clips, press releases, technical analyses, and the after-action report. A detailed listing of the documents reviewed is contained in Tab A to Annex C.

(U) The group then interviewed all principals involved in the planning and conduct of the operation. The group did not attempt to talk to every individual who participated, but did consult with everyone considered to have been in a position to contribute substantive testimony. Every person that any member of the group wished to interview was made available for that purpose. All of the individuals contacted and their relationship with the operation are listed in Tab B to Annex C.

~~TOP SECRET~~
~~TOP SECRET~~

(TS) The group traveled to the Central Intelligence Agency (CIA) and selected DOD field organizations

1-2

During visits

(b)(1)(c)
(b)(1)(a)

Capabilities,
unit
capabilities

the group received command presentations and technical briefings and inspected unit equipment such as the RH-53D, CH-53D, and MC-130 aircraft. the group observed night special operations exercises

the group received a number of live firing weapons demonstrations and simulate the recovery of hostages from a hijacked aircraft and a terrorist-held building.

(U) During the field command visits, extensive round-table discussions with mission personnel of all grades, from commanders to sergeants, were held as a group, and useful insights as to personnel background, skill, motivation, and proficiency were attained.

1-2

1-3

plans,
activity

(TS) In addition to those sessions which were conducted for the group, individual members made a number of visits outside the Pentagon-

(b)(1)(a)(1)
(b)(1)(a)(4)

--to pursue their own avenues of investigation.

(TS) The group was authorized access to all levels of intelligence.

(TS) Because the group was chartered by the Joint Chiefs of Staff to whom its conclusions and recommendations would be specifically addressed, the majority of discussions were with military personnel, the organizations and procedures examined were within the National Military Command System, and the main part of the analyses and recommendations deal with matters internal to the Department of Defense.

1-2

1-3

unit
capabilities,
activity

(b)(1)(a)(2)
(b)(1)(a)(4)

~~TOP SECRET~~
~~TOP SECRET~~

(TS) The actual methodology employed by the group in the analytical phase was simple and straightforward. After the group had reviewed the written material, conducted interviews, and witnessed the capabilities of the forces, each member compiled a list of all items that troubled him. These points were consolidated into areas of concern and then isolated into specific issues. As the issues were identified, each was in turn analyzed.

(TS) First, the issue was described in a non-qualitative sense and then supported by the facts as the group was able to determine them. To present a balanced picture, the rationale of the JTF planners--as perceived by the group--was carefully explained.

(TS) The group then postulated an alternative solution and developed it in sufficient detail to establish its validity and feasibility. Those alternatives that turned out to be patently impractical or clearly inferior were eliminated from the list of issues. The issues were evaluated to determine net impact and to judge the degree to which the issue affected the outcome of the operation and whether the proposed solution would have enhanced the probability of mission success.

(TS) Using this deliberative process, the group attempted to reach unanimous positions or a group consensus. However, where unanimity was not achieved, separate views were accepted, to be noted either in the text of the analysis or through footnoting.

(TS) As the review process proceeded, the group identified the valid issues, prioritized them as to their importance, and categorized them in areas related to the tasking of the Terms of Reference to form the group's conclusions. In the final analysis, it was found that those specific conclusions which should generate corrective action fell into two broad general areas, which in turn determined the group's recommendations.

~~TOP SECRET~~
~~TOP SECRET~~

II. CHRONOLOGY

(U) Background

(U) A review of the effort to recover US hostages from Iran first requires a look into the past to determine, from a military point of view, the proper context within which to evaluate the overall operation.

(U) The use of terrorism as a means of waging international political warfare reached new levels during the latter part of the 1970s. Prior to this development, such activities were limited to relatively small, isolated incidents such as aircraft hijacking or kidnapping of individuals, actions that in most instances were handled by various types of police forces.

1-4
supplied
by
the
author

[REDACTED]

(b)(1)(a)(1)
(b)(1)(a)(2)

Service efforts were generally limited to unconventional warfare (UW) activities as defined in JCS Pub 1--"a broad spectrum of military and paramilitary operations conducted in enemy held, enemy controlled or politically sensitive territory. Unconventional warfare includes, but is not limited to, the interrelated fields of guerrilla warfare, evasion and escape, subversion, sabotage, direct action missions and other operations of a low visibility, covert or clandestine nature."

~~(S)~~ These interrelated aspects of UW warfare may be performed by diverse individuals or groups during peace or war. US forces having such capabilities consist of Army Special Forces, Air Force Special Air Warfare units, and certain Navy units. The term "special operations," defined as "secondary or supporting operations which may be adjuncts to various other operations and for which no one Service is assigned primary responsibility," is often used in conjunction with the term UW but may well be a part of an overall conventional effort.

~~(S)~~ Various forms of UW activity have been performed to varying degrees by the Armed Forces during and since World War II. Further, all the Services, based on their mission and responsibilities, maintain appropriate capabilities for conducting special operations with general purpose forces. Military raids, mountain/desert warfare, cold weather operations, amphibious raids and demonstrations, emergency evacuation, and disaster relief are some examples of special operations that our conventional forces must be prepared to execute.

(b)(1)(a)(1)
(b)(1)(a)(2)



1-4
lans,
net
pabilities
net
Inevitably

~~(TS)~~ The newness of counterterrorism as a military operation can be exemplified by its absence from any joint publication such as JCS Pubs 1 and 2. The ongoing application of military forces to CT operations establishes a clear requirement for doctrinal and literature development as well as standardization of terms.

~~(TS)~~ Initial Planning
4 November to 30 November 1979

~~(TS)~~ Planning was a continuous process from 4 November 1979 through 23 April 1980. Factors that prompted continued updating included, but were not limited to, the following:

- Intelligence
- Concepts of operation
- Training/special mission capabilities
- Equipment availability
- Communications procedures
- Base availability
- Environmental factors
- Political factors

~~(TS)~~ The single overriding consideration during the planning phase was the need for operations security (OPSEC). The most stringent requirement was that the ground rescue force reach the Embassy compound undetected. Certainly the next most influential characteristic of this operation was the dynamic, evolutionary aspect of the planning process.

~~(TS)~~ A fundamental requirement for success of this mission was the attainment of a capability to employ and integrate

~~TOP SECRET~~

helicopters, fixed wing aircraft, ground servicing/refueling operations, and ground combat troops in a complex, long-range mission scenario conducted under cover of darkness without lights. This capability did not exist on 4 November 1979. Equally important is that such a capability had to be developed under the stringent requirements of OPSEC.

(S) Throughout the period 4 November 1979 through 23 April 1980, the CJCS was kept informed of progress and frequently provided guidance to COMJTF after his designation. Members of the Joint Chiefs of Staff also received individual progress reports and on three occasions were briefed as a group in order to review aspects of the preparatory phase. The Joint Chiefs of Staff provided the JTF all resources requested throughout the entire planning and preparatory period, except for occasional periods when there were modest limitations on availability of C-130 resources.

(S) Training exercises and changes in concept that tended to drive subsequent activities are listed in chronological order to increase understanding of the overall scenario.

(S) On 4 November 1979, the Embassy in Tehran was taken by a group of Iranians, and 63 Americans became hostage.

(S) During the next few days, a J-3 planning cell was formed by the CJCS to formulate concepts for the conduct of a rescue mission.

(S) [REDACTED] the ground rescue force and proceeded to establish an isolated training camp. [REDACTED]

(b)(1)(a)(1)
(b)(1)(a)(2)

(S) On 12 November 1979, Major General Vaught, US Army, reported to the CJCS and was directed to organize and command a JTF with the assigned mission of rescuing the hostages. (Note: It is important to emphasize that at this point there was great concern that the hostages might soon be tried and jailed or killed. A great sense of urgency existed to develop a capability for rescue as soon as possible.)

(S) Two major challenges affected the planners--the distant location and large size of Iran, and the fact that, to meet OPSEC requirements, early contact with other countries was precluded.

(TS) On 16 November, a select weather team from US Air Force Air Weather Service (AWS) began to form and provide continuous support to the JTF.

(TS) On 17 November, [redacted] to its training camp and began to train [redacted]

(b)(1)(a)(1)
(b)(1)(a)(c)

1-4
plans, operations, capabilities, and capabilities

(TS) On 18 November, secure communications had been established among selected agencies involved in planning the rescue effort.

(TS) The C-130 aircrews that would transport [redacted] into Iran were selected [redacted] and began rescue mission training. Several alternatives to air landing [redacted] the process of examination.

(TS) After review [redacted] on 19 November, COMJTF recommended that a helicopter option be developed. CJCS approved the development of a concept using helicopters and directed early refinement of the plan to support a near-term rescue attempt if required.

(TS) On or about 19 November, the RH-53 was selected as the best available helicopter for several pertinent reasons.

(TS) On 20 November, CJCS directed the formation of a helicopter detachment, using the RH-53s [redacted]

(TS) Also on 20 November, CJCS directed that [redacted] six RH-53Ds deploy to the Indian Ocean [redacted]

(TS) On 21 November, the helicopter detachment began special mission capability training with emphasis on extended night navigation using night vision goggles (NVGs) and refueling activities. (Note: All crews at this point were operating outside the mission areas for which they were previously trained and were, in fact, attempting to develop an entirely new operational capability.)

(TS) During the period 20-29 November, there transpired a whole host of actions: development of intelligence procedures, research of additional en route refueling sites, selection of landing sites, and resolution of factors related to available hours of darkness.

1-4
Plans, capabilities,
unit capabilities,
Systems capabilities

[REDACTED]

(b)(1)(a)(1)
(b)(1)(a)(2)

(TS) By 29 November, force commanders began to gain confidence in their developing operational capability. CJCS approved a move of the helicopters [REDACTED] so that training could be conducted in a more realistic environment. OPSEC was observed, and the move was completed on 30 November without apparent detection.

(TS) On 30 November, the COMJTF training estimate was as follows: helicopter aircrew capability was judged to be fair, with considerable work remaining; C-130 aircrew status was judged to be mission capable, but with more training required in blacked-out landings; [REDACTED]

[REDACTED] no logistic restraints had surfaced from any units; weather and intelligence capabilities were improving.

1-4
1-5
Capabilities,
Source

[REDACTED]

(b)(1)(a)(1)
(b)(1)(a)(1)

(TS) By the end of November, the COMJTF overall assessment was that a force capability was beginning to emerge but that major deficiencies in planning, intelligence, communications, and training were evident.

(TS) Initial Training In the Desert
30 November to 24 December 1979

(TS) On 1 December, the training missions were flown using the replacement helicopters. (Note: Those helicopters used for training in the earlier phase had been returned to owning units.)

(TS) During the period 9 December through 21 December, 153 hours were flown, [REDACTED] Navigation and formation flying were stressed along with night landings under total blackout conditions.

1-4
Capabilities

(b)(1)(a)(1)

(TS) On 18-19 December, the first integrated training was conducted. The exercises went poorly, with problems in night navigation encountered by the helicopters [redacted]

(b)(1)(a)(2)

1-4
systems capabilities,
systems, mission capabilities,
unit vulnerabilities

[redacted] At this time, COMJTF and planning staff recognized that pilots with increased experience in the type of mission profiles to be flown would be required. A major change in personnel took place; nine pilots were replaced. [redacted]

(TS) The Palletized Inertial Navigation System (PINS) was provided to improve helicopter navigation capability, and pilots began training with this item. [redacted]

(TS) By 27 December, refueling of helicopters from C-130s on the ground was surfaced as an alternative to airdropping fuel blivits; [redacted]

(b)(1)(a)

1-4
Plans

[redacted] had been selected as a possible ground refueling site.

(TS) [redacted] participate in the desert joint training effort.

(TS) By 18 December, communications arrangements and procedures to support the concept had been developed except for those of airborne elements [redacted]

(TS) Representatives of USCINCEUR and CINCPAC arrived in December to participate in planning and coordination.

(TS) By mid-December, plans were set for another joint training period using representative forces [redacted]

(TS) During this training exercise, [redacted]

(b)(1)(a)

Except for the helicopter detachment, all units redeployed back to their home stations.

(TS) On 22 December, two additional RH-53Ds were airlifted and embarked aboard NIMITZ for transit to the Indian Ocean. During this period, OMEGA navigation systems had been acquired, and preparations were made to install them on the eight mission RH-53Ds. One OMEGA system was installed in a training aircraft [redacted]

(b)(1)(a)(1)

1-4
Systems capabilities

1-4
Plans

(TS) As of 24 December, the intelligence data base had continued to grow.

[REDACTED]

(b)(1)(a)(1)
(b)(1)(a)(4)

1-4
1-5
low, statistics, planning, method

(TS) Christmas Break
24 December 1979 to 4 January 1980

(TS) Those units and individuals involved in training had been committed without break since early November. In order to sustain force effectiveness as well as maintain OPSEC, training units were authorized Christmas leave. Key commanders and planning staffs continued to work on all pertinent issues during the period.

(TS) [REDACTED]
4 January to 1 February 1980

(TS) On 4-5 January 1980, COMJTF conducted a planning and review conference [REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

(TS) On 5 January, the helicopter detachment resumed [REDACTED] navigation procedures and techniques using the 10 helicopters available and using OMEGA and PINS navigation systems.

(b)(1)(a)(2)

1-4
communications

[REDACTED] (It had already been established that prior to takeoff, a forecast for visual meteorological conditions (VMC) on the mission track was required in order to execute the mission.)

(TS) During the 4-5 January conference, weather was highlighted as a crucial factor, so additional requirements for weather support were specified.

(TS) By early January, [REDACTED] the probable staging base in the event mission deployment was directed. Subsequently, extensive planning led to a base support plan.

(b)(1)(a)(1)
(b)(1)(a)(5)

1-4
1-6
plans, activities

(TS) After several more planning conferences, [redacted] mission requirements had grown [redacted] (b)(1)(a)(1)
[redacted] (b)(1)(a)(2)

1-4

[redacted] Additional personnel and equipment factors drove up the size of [redacted]

Plans, unit capabilities

(TS) On 12 January, the fourth C-130 arrived to provide sufficient air-refuelable, forward-looking infrared (FLIR) equipped aircraft.

(TS) In mid-January, the required number of helicopters to arrive at the hideout was confirmed to be five, six at the refueling site, and seven for launch, for a total of eight aboard the carrier. (Note: As mentioned earlier, two additional RH-53Ds were to be put aboard NIMITZ.)

(TS) At this time, the operational readiness of the helicopters aboard KITTY HAWK came under closer scrutiny. To assure required flying time rates and appropriate supply levels, a JTF three-man team visited the carrier to conduct a review and engage in necessary discussions with key carrier personnel and HM-16 members.

(TS) The JTF conducted another joint training exercise in mid-January [redacted] in a new area, with long-range navigation flights similar to those planned for the mission. This event was productive, but it also identified many problems that required additional planning and training.

Problems were highlighted in the areas of OPSEC, weather, helicopter reliability, communications, refueling procedures, airfield security and control, and intelligence.

(TS) By this time, the JTF J-2, [redacted] had found only one in-country area that was sufficiently isolated [redacted]

[redacted] such a site, named Desert One, was considered to be a possible new solution to the helicopter refueling portion of the mission. [redacted]

1-5

activity

(TS) On 21 January, because of additional airlift capability required as the number of personnel increased, two [redacted] aircrews [redacted] began to train with the C-130 crews. These two aircrews were considered mission capable in two weeks. (b)(1)(a)(4)

(b)(1)(a)(1)
(b)(1)(a)(2)

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

(TS) The Fourth Joint Training Exercise

1 to 16 February 1980

(TS) During the first week in February, the joint training exercise [REDACTED] was conducted to evaluate progress made during the last two weeks in January. In spite of bad weather, task force elements in general showed improvement, but more work was also indicated in the areas of helicopter navigation and combat control. Needed now was more intelligence, additional training, and a plan to refuel the helicopters at Desert One.

(TS) By 8 February, following the postexercise conference, the commanders and planners for the first time had confidence that a capability existed for the rescue.

(TS) Desert One

16 February to 12 April 1980

[REDACTED]

(b)(1)(a)(1)
(b)(1)(a)(4)

(TS) On 26-27 February, another JTF exercise was conducted for the purpose of sustaining mission capabilities, incorporating Combat Control Team expertise, and refining JTF communications. JTF confidence was further increased.

(TS) At this time, increased attention by the planners was being placed on two uncontrollable and pressing environmental factors that could cause major revision of the rescue plan: Available hours of darkness and ambient temperatures. By

1-4
Plans,
capabilities,
and
activities,
and
intelligence

1-4
1-5
Plans,
capabilities,
activities

1 May, the number of hours between evening and morning nautical twilight would drop to nine hours and 16 minutes. Eight hours were required for the helicopter mission, with a one-hour contingency factor. By 10 May, prevailing temperatures of 30o C would increase density altitude and limit helicopter performance. With these conditions, additional helicopters and C-130s would be required. [REDACTED]

(b)(1)(a)(1)

[REDACTED] COMJTF also definitely concluded that not less than six mission-capable helicopters had to reach Desert One to insure mission continuation.

(TS) On 25-27 March, the last major JTF training exercise was conducted and was considered a success, with a recognized increase in confidence. [REDACTED]

(TS) By 28 March, [REDACTED] the hostage rescue mission [REDACTED] a seven-day response status. Additional deployment was stopped until 15 April, when additional loads commenced movement [REDACTED]

(b)(1)(a)(5)

(TS) In late March, a second visit of three JTF personnel representing communications, operations, and maintenance visited NIMITZ to verify the readiness of the eight helicopters.

(TS) The JTF continued to [REDACTED]

(b)(1)(a)(1)
(b)(1)(a)(2)

[REDACTED] find a desert landing area at which the C-130s could refuel the helicopters.

(b)(1)(a)(1)
(b)(1)(a)(4)

(TS) On 7 April [REDACTED] COMJTF concluded that Desert One was suitable for the helicopter refueling operation.

(TS) As refueling requirements increased over time, a decision was made to transfer the refueling mission [REDACTED]

(b)(1)(a)(1)
(b)(1)(a)(2)

[REDACTED] pilots who had trained for the mission were to fly [REDACTED]

1-4
Plans, capabilities

activities

1-4
Plans, capabilities

1-4
1-5
Plans, capabilities, activity, methods

1-4
Weapons, units, capabilities

~~(TS)~~ The Countdown
12 to 24 April 1980

~~(TS)~~ On 12 April, CJCS instructed COMJTF to finalize planning for deployment of the force [redacted] (b)(1)(a)(1) (b)(1)(a)(5)

1-4

1-6

Plans, activities

COMJTF recommended Thursday, 24 April, based on many considerations, a primary one being moon illumination.

1-4

1-6

Plans, capabilities, relations, activities

~~(TS)~~ A series of interrelated but separate actions were initiated, one of the more significant being a training exercise to practice helicopter refueling on the desert as a final verification of this capability. [redacted] (b)(1)(a)(1) (b)(1)(a)(5)

[redacted]

~~(TS)~~ On 15-16 April, COMJTF conducted a two-day meeting in the Pentagon to review the plan with commanders, affirm command and control matters, evaluate force readiness, review contingencies, and make an overall assessment of mission success should it be executed on 24 April.

~~(TS)~~ On 16 April, the Joint Chiefs of Staff approved the plan. That evening, the President approved the plan after he was briefed by COMJTF, Deputy COMJTF, and the commander of the ground rescue force. The President stated that deployment flow should proceed with 24 April as the planning date for execution. The NCA would direct COMJTF to execute, delay, or cancel the mission based on conditions existing at the time of decision.

~~(TS)~~ Through the period 19-23 April, the forces deployed. By mid-afternoon on 24 April, the forces were in place and ready for execution.

~~(TS)~~ Execution and Abort
24 and 25 April 1980

~~(TS)~~ On the evening of 24 April, after 5-1/2 months of planning and training under very tight OPSEC, eight RH-53

1-4
Plans,
and
Capabilities

helicopters took off from the aircraft carrier NIMITZ, [redacted] and began a journey of nearly 500 nautical miles at night and low altitude to a preselected refueling site, Desert One, in the desert. [redacted]

(b)(1)(a)(1)
(b)(1)(a)(2)

[redacted] was also in the execution phase on a different track and time schedule. Approximately two hours after takeoff, the crew of Helicopter #6 received cockpit indications of an impending rotor blade failure; landed; verified the malfunction (an automatic abort situation); and abandoned their aircraft, taking all classified material with them. The crew was picked up by another helicopter, which then continued the mission individually.

(TS) Approximately one hour thereafter, the helicopter formation unexpectedly encountered a dust cloud of unknown size and density.

(TS) The helicopters broke out of the first area of suspended dust but, within an hour, entered a second, larger and denser area. While attempting to navigate through this second area with severely degraded visibility, a second helicopter (#5) experienced a failure of several critical navigation and flight instruments. Due to progressively deteriorating flight conditions that made safe flight extremely questionable, the helicopter pilot determined that it would be unwise to continue. He aborted the mission, reversed course, and recovered on NIMITZ. Eventually, six of the original eight helicopters arrived at the refueling site in intervals between approximately 50 minutes and 85 minutes later than planned.

(TS) While en route, a third helicopter (#2) experienced a partial hydraulic failure, but the crew elected to continue to the refueling site believing repairs could be accomplished there. Upon landing, however, the crew and the helicopter unit commander determined that the helicopter could not be repaired. A hydraulic pump had failed due to a fluid leak, and no replacement pump was available. Even if a pump had been immediately available, there was insufficient time to change it, repair the cause of the leak, service the system, and complete the next leg prior to daylight. The helicopter was unsafe to continue the mission unrepaired.

(TS) Earlier, it had been determined that a minimum of six operational helicopters would be required at the refueling site to continue the mission. Since at this point there were only five operational, the on-scene commander advised COMJTF by radio of the situation, and he in turn communicated to Washington the status of the force and his intention to abort the operation and return to launch base. The President concurred in the decision that the mission could not continue, and preparations began for withdrawal of the five operational helicopters, the C-130s, and the rescue force.

~~TOP SECRET~~

(S) While repositioning one helicopter to permit another to top off his fuel tanks for the return flight, the first helicopter collided with one of the refueling C-130s. Both aircraft were immediately engulfed in flames in which eight crew members died and five other members of the team were injured. Since the C-130 was loaded with members of the rescue force awaiting extraction, even greater injury and loss of life were avoided only by swift and disciplined evacuation of the burning aircraft. Shortly afterwards, ammunition aboard both aircraft began to explode. Several helicopters were struck by shrapnel from the explosion and/or the burning ammunition, and at least one and possibly more were rendered nonflyable. At this point, with time and fuel running out for the C-130s, the decision was made to transfer all helicopter crews to the remaining C-130s and to depart the area.

(S) Follow-on portions of the mission beyond Desert One will not be discussed since various elements of the plan are of such classified nature that their inclusion might impact unfavorably on possible future actions.

~~TOP SECRET~~

III. ANALYSIS OF ISSUES

(U) The findings of this chapter are central to the entire work of the Special Operations Review Group. The process of identifying, defining, and evaluating the key issues is the basis of analysis from which the conclusions and recommendations flow.

~~(TS)~~ The group's charter was not to find fault or to place blame; it was, as stated in the Terms of Reference, to make "evaluations and specific recommendations . . . on the key aspects of planning and execution," insuring that the broader aspects of operation were addressed. Yet, a broader perspective can be derived only from a full understanding of the mission, a mission that did not achieve its defined objective. By definition, the issues raised in this chapter are those decisions or actions that may be questioned because, in the opinion of the review group, alternatives available might have increased the probability that the mission could continue or decreased the risks to mission success.

~~(TS)~~ While the review group has attempted to maintain a constructive outlook, it has been critical where and when its collective judgment dictated. While the group believes these criticisms valid and necessary to the conclusions reached and recommendations made, no judgment of the able men who planned this mission or the brave professionals who executed it is intended nor should be inferred.

~~(TS)~~ The men charged with planning the rescue operation in November 1979 faced certain basic factors in the overall situation that must be appreciated in order that the analyses which follow are kept in proper perspective:

~~(TS)~~ A forcible rescue was very much a contingency plan, only to be implemented if all other alternatives failed.

~~(TS)~~ On the other hand, a sense of urgency was impressed on COMJTF and his staff at the very outset: that an immediate operation could be required if the hostages were to be tried or executed.

~~(TS)~~ All planning and preparation required maximum OPSEC because the sine qua non of the concept was to place ~~_____~~ with total surprise.

(b)(1)(a)(1)

1-7
plans
capabilities

~~(TS)~~ Nowhere in the US Armed Forces was there a standing capability to perform the stated mission.

1-7
Plans,
Mission
Vulnerabilities

(TS) Those overriding and, at times, conflicting realities were central to some of the early decisions regarding the selection of a JTF staff, holding JCS CONPLAN [REDACTED] in abeyance, (b)(1)(a)(1) and the compartmentalization of various preparatory functions. (b)(1)(a)(1)

(TS) Training for the Iran hostage rescue operation was a many-faceted and complex task that was necessarily accomplished concurrently with mission planning. It was controlled by the dictates of a constantly evolving plan. The training program was affected by the development of new intelligence during the entire period from inception to execution of the mission. It was essential that the training program remain sensitive and responsive to changing requirements. The task of mission execution required extraordinary command orchestration of widely separated actions by various force elements. Components of the force launched from different locations, each coping with unique local departure situations that demanded exact adherence to a time schedule to assure effective force integration. For example, aircraft carrier positioning for helicopter launch and C-130 parking, taxiing, and takeoff sequence at the staging air base were significant factors. Timely decisions had to be made to compensate for unplanned contingencies. The great emphasis on OPSEC, although vital to mission success, severely limited the communications necessary to coordinate the operation, particularly in handling unforeseen contingencies.

(TS) The review group determined that there were 23 issues which deserved full analysis. In this report, these issues are arranged in an order beginning with the most general and conceptual to the most specific and operational. The order implies no prioritization as to importance, nor was there any attempt to list the issues in chronological order. While key areas such as planning criteria, organization, adequacy of forces, training support, and command and control were dealt with in this approach, many of the issues transcend one particular area. The analytical method employed by the review group attempted to correlate its analysis with its charter--to provide positive alternatives and to draw from them lessons of principle that may be used in the future. Each analysis raises the issue, recapitulates the actual occurrence as determined by the group, and outlines the group's understanding of the JTF rationale for its choice. The review group then explains its alternative in more detail and assesses the implications of the alternative, both positive and negative. Each analysis concludes with a review group evaluation, including the group's judgment of the issue's importance. Was the issue of paramount importance to managing mission risk? Was it of some importance in increasing the probability of success? Was it of marginal value in terms of lessons learned?

~~TOP SECRET~~

(76) One final note of caution is appropriate. The Special Operations Review Group unanimously concluded that no one action or lack of action caused the operation to fail and that no one alternative or all the alternatives could have guaranteed its success. It was by its nature a high-risk mission that involved the possibility of failure. The object of the following issue analysis was, with the benefit of hindsight, to identify areas in which risk might have been better managed.

~~TOP SECRET~~

ISSUE 1: (U) OPSEC

~~(S)~~ Event. Critical concern for OPSEC at all levels tended to dominate every aspect of mission planning, training, and execution. From the outset, task force members were imbued with the absolute need for total secrecy. Planning was strictly compartmentalized; plans review was performed largely by those involved in the planning process; individuals were generally restricted to that information they actually required to play their particular roles;

(b)(1)(a)(1)

[REDACTED]

there were pressures clearly felt by all involved to keep the force small in order to decrease the risk of detection. In some instances, personnel on the periphery of the JTF's activities deduced what was afoot, but to the credit of such individuals they appear to have kept their conjectures to themselves. In short, strictest adherence to OPSEC guidelines seems to have been maintained from the very outset of mission inception up to the accident following the mission abort at Desert One.

~~(S)~~ JTF Rationale. The underlying reasons for such heavy emphasis on OPSEC were well understood throughout the JTF. Surprise was the sine qua non for mission success, and complete security was essential to attain surprise.

~~(S)~~ Alternative. This was, perhaps, the group's most difficult judgment: Did a seemingly nondiscriminating overemphasis on OPSEC exclude certain activities and provisions that could have materially enhanced the probability of mission success? On balance and in retrospect, the group concluded that slightly greater selectivity and flexibility in the OPSEC arena, particularly within the JTF, could have been beneficial in operational terms without necessarily sacrificing security. In planning, a separate plans review element would have provided a useful testing mechanism before going forward for policy-level approvals; in joint training and evaluation, units from different Service components could have been integrated with greater frequency and for longer periods, especially when such activities were handled in the context of thoughtfully conceived cover stories; in execution, slightly easing several OPSEC restrictions to air operations as to shared insertion routes, communications channels and procedures, and general mutual support would have permitted the C-130s to play an important weather reconnaissance role en route to and at Desert One (i.e., pathfinder duties and code word transmission of

1-8
plans

terminal weather conditions). These examples are illustrative and do not exclude several other possible excursions from what the JTF actually did or refrained from doing because of OPSEC considerations.

~~(TS)~~ Implications. Basically, the group's alternative would have slightly reduced OPSEC restrictions in selected areas, implying incrementally improved force posture and enhanced potential effectiveness at the cost of some increased probability of operational compromise. Admittedly, it cannot be predicted at what point in easing security restrictions secrecy could have been breached, which in turn might have resulted in canceling the mission. What is known and therefore should be underscored is the fact that the level of security practiced by the JTF did preserve secrecy.

~~(TS)~~ Evaluation. The question of too much or too little OPSEC was easily the most controversial issue, and the group's differences with actual JTF OPSEC practices epitomize the advantage of hindsight. General conclusions regarding the areas in which information flow could have been improved without compromise to OPSEC are discussed in Chapter IV.

ISSUE 2: ~~SW~~ Organization, command and control, and the applicability of [REDACTED]

(TS) Event. When the hostage seizure incident occurred in Iran on 4 November 1979, a small planning cell [REDACTED]

[REDACTED] began to formulate concepts for military options as directed by the CJCS. [REDACTED]

[REDACTED] During this early period, the organizational and planning framework of JCS [REDACTED] was not adopted, although some of its provisions were incorporated. These included utilization of intelligence assets, [REDACTED]

[REDACTED] Other major areas of endeavor, such as task organization planning, integration of concurrent planning by subordinate units, and determination of support requirements, were compartmentalized and reliant upon ad hoc arrangements. [REDACTED]

(TS) When COMJTF received his tasking on 12 November 1979, the [REDACTED] rescue planning cell became the nucleus JTF staff [REDACTED]. A [REDACTED] CINCREDCOM joint table of distribution [REDACTED] was the basis for JTF headquarters manpower requirements.

(TS) A USAF general officer was appointed special consultant to COMJTF because of experience and knowledge gained during a recent tour of duty in Iran.

(TS) During the 10-day period 16 to 25 November 1979, the following forces and elements were assigned to the JTF:

USAF AWS team.

[REDACTED]
USN/USMC helicopter detachment.
[REDACTED]

1-10
Plans
youth

(b)(1)(6)

~~TOP SECRET~~

(TS) Training began immediately. Concurrently, conceptual plans were developed by the JTF staff and reviewed by the CJCS. [REDACTED]

(b)(1)(a)(1)

1-10

Plans, capabilities

[REDACTED] On 19 November 1979, COMJTF recommended a helicopter option as having the greatest potential for success.

(TS) The helicopter detachment (pilots and aircrewmembers) was initially formed from Navy and Marine resources [REDACTED]

As operational requirements increased, additional pilots and crewmen were provided from other locations. Special mission training was moved to the western United States for a more realistic desert environment. On 9 December 1979, a new helicopter detachment commander was assigned, and a vigorous training program was instituted to attain the special mission capabilities required. No overall naval component commander or provisional squadron command/staff capability was provided.

(TS) The senior Marine officer involved in the operation was assigned to the Office of the CJCS and, while not officially designated a member of the JTF staff, became involved in mission planning and execution. At the direction of the Director for Operations, Joint Staff, he reviewed the early November helicopter planning, examined the aircrew selection against special mission requirements, arranged for the assignment of more experienced pilots, assessed the helicopter force training effort, and planned the movement of the unit to the western US desert training site. During this period, it was implied that this officer was in charge of the helicopter force during the preparation phase, and he believed this to be so. However, COMJTF may have thought differently, and it was evident throughout the first two months of training that much (if not all) of the COMJTF direction of effort concerning helicopter preparation and special mission capability training was done through the general officer who was thought to be the consultant on Iran. In mid-January 1980, the role of the senior Marine had evolved into that of overall helicopter force leader, since no other designation had been made, and, at his request, he began to attend the COMJTF planning meetings.

[REDACTED]

~~TOP SECRET~~

(b)(1)(a)(i)

1-10
plans,
capabilities

(TS) Early in the planning, a senior USAF officer with special operations [redacted] experience was assigned as Deputy COMJTF/Air Component Commander. His role evolved into the task of supervising and coordinating the C-130 training. Just prior to mission execution, he was assigned as "on scene" commander at Desert One, responsible for supervising the refueling operations.

(TS) The decision process during planning and the command and control organization during execution of the Iran hostage rescue mission afforded clear lines of authority from the President to the appropriate echelon. There was a straight line from the President through the Secretary of Defense and the Joint Chiefs of Staff to COMJTF; during the actual execution, CJCS acted on behalf of the Joint Chiefs of Staff in this chain of command. [redacted]

[redacted] From COMJTF downward, command channels were less well defined in some areas and only implied in others.

(TS) During the training phase, command channels provided for dissemination of guidance to individual elements of the force from COMJTF. Each element was provided only those portions of the plan considered essential for its particular purpose. Because of the stringent OPSEC requirements, compartmentalization was considered necessary. The rigid compartmentalization during the early stages is considered to have been a deterrent to training and readiness progress. Clearly, during the final stages of preparation, all element leaders should have been thoroughly familiar with the overall plan. This could have enhanced greater integration of all elements of the force.

(TS) Informally, the senior Marine was advisor to COMJTF regarding helicopter operations. Additionally, he supervised helicopter training, although not formally in the chain of command. The helicopter flight leader/detachment commander was made responsible for unit flight proficiency to achieve a special mission capability requiring flight regimes never achieved by any helicopter force in the world (and to do it as soon as possible). Further, as detachment commander, he was responsible for the total performance and welfare of his men, but not provided adequate staff or administrative support.

(TS) Early-on, the designated Deputy COMJTF/Air Force Component Commander role involved the task of supervising and coordinating the C-130 training. The C-130 elements were directly under individual squadron commanders. Just

prior to execution, he was designated "on scene" commander Desert One, implying a command, control, and communications (C3) capability to exercises command. This capability was not fully provided. A general officer served primarily as a consultant on Iran from late November 1979 to mid-February 1980. He spent considerable time during this period at the western US training site monitoring helicopter and other air training. On 12 April 1980, he was designated the Deputy COMJTF.

1-10
Plans
(TS) The ground force chain of command was simplified in that the Army elements [redacted] reported (b)(1)(a)(1) directly to COMJTF, who was also the Ground Component Commander.

(TS) JTF Rationale. OPSEC was the overriding consideration in every aspect of mission planning, training, deployment, and execution because of the absolute requirement to reach the Embassy compound undetected. OPSEC, coupled with the dynamic planning process and development of special mission capabilities, drove COMJTF to the techniques adopted for this organization, planning, and preparation by the JTF.

(TS) Alternative. The requirements for stringent OPSEC are clearly recognized. Nevertheless, it is considered essential that there be a balance between rigid compartmentalization, to include secrecy through informal or ad hoc arrangements, on the one hand and sound organization, planning, and preparation efforts on the other.

(TS) The JCS Crisis Action System (CAS) provides guidance for the conduct of planning for the use of military forces during emergency or time-sensitive situations. When the hostage seizure occurred in Iran, the group would have implemented existing JCS procedures intended to provide the Joint Chiefs of Staff, Services, commanders of unified and specified commands, and other agencies information with which to develop recommendations to the NCA pertaining to military courses of action.

(TS) JCS CONPLAN [redacted] provides the NCA with a wide range of options for utilizing military forces for rapid emergency actions to counter terrorism directed against US interests, citizens, and/or property in other nations. The plan does not abrogate those responsibilities found in plans or tasking currently in effect [redacted] but rather provides the conceptual basis for an additional capability. Supporting plans have been prepared by the commanders of unified commands. [redacted]

1-10
Plans

(TS) The group's alternative for organization, command, and control would have used the stable, existing framework of JCS CONPLAN [REDACTED] to organize, plan, train, and execute the mission, as well as to provide the mandatory OPSEC.

(b)(1)(a)(1)

(TS) Prolonged ad hoc arrangements often result in tasking from different sources and can cause confusion at the operating level. These situational arrangements may hinder preparation and can impact adversely on overall cohesion of effort. The review group's alternative would strive for a better balance between more appropriate disclosure policy, particularly at the Service Chief/CINC level, to enhance the organizing, equipping, and training of forces.

(TS) Further, basic JCS CONPLAN [REDACTED] methodologies and/or existing unified/specified command procedures make full provisions for compartmentalization. OPSEC can be, and has been, preserved when appropriate steps are taken. Thus, the entire preparation phase could have been accelerated and overall readiness enhanced.

(TS) Implications. On the positive side, the group's alternative would have led to a "quicker start" in the preparation phase. Additionally, task organization and force planning would have been enhanced and command relationships clarified. These in turn would have led to more effective command and control at all levels. On the negative side, the group alternative would have increased the number of people involved and, therefore, increased the OPSEC risk.

(TS) Evaluation. The potential for increased capability and readiness must be weighed against possible OPSEC risk. Although it is not possible to measure the outcome of the proposed alternative in terms of mission success, it is believed that application of JCS CONPLAN [REDACTED] and JCS/Service doctrinal precepts could have improved the organization, planning, and preparation of the force through unity of command and cohesion of effort. That, in turn, would have led to more effective command and control and enhanced overall JTF readiness.

ISSUE 3: (U) Centralized and integrated intelligence support external to the JTF

(TS) Event. COMJTF, his staff, and subordinate commanders were fully aware that successful mission accomplishment would critically depend on precise and timely intelligence and, moreover, that intelligence would tend to drive the operation from conception to execution. The JTF fortunately had a professionally capable intelligence officer to assume the role of J-2 from the beginning. In addition, each of the Service force components--with the exception of the helicopter contingent--already had staff intelligence officers heading up small intelligence staff sections. The helicopter contingent was provided intelligence support from the JTF J-2 section. In the JTF headquarters itself, the intelligence section remained small throughout the period, beginning with one officer on 4 November and increasing to four in the course of planning.

(TS) Nonetheless, for an operation of the scope and complexity of the Iranian mission, a significant augmentation of existing intelligence capabilities was mandatory. This augmentation tended to evolve over time and in somewhat piecemeal fashion as planning got under way and as intelligence needs grew. [REDACTED] were attached directly to COMJTF's staff in the early days, and working arrangements were set up by the JTF J-2 with points of contact within [REDACTED]

1 - // activity method

[REDACTED] Eventually, these points of contact or interfaces with outside staffs and agencies were widened from one to several individuals, and the number of personnel beyond the interface (requirements officers, analysts, photo interpreters, and other specialists involved in providing specific intelligence) increased accordingly as the volume of work reached higher levels. In some ways, however, certain elements of the Intelligence Community seemed slow in harnessing themselves initially for the tasks at hand. As a result, intelligence gaps and deficiencies existed, especially in the early planning phases when the focus was on developing an immediate rescue capability should the hostages appear in imminent danger of execution.

(TS) Strict adherence to OPSEC criteria was maintained throughout. [REDACTED]

[REDACTED] most of the intelligence officers from staffs and agencies outside the JTF were not fully briefed and cleared for the operation at the outset of planning, although those individuals working JTF-related intelligence requirements on

a continuing basis eventually were able to deduce for themselves in essence what was being planned. Some of these officers felt that their initial effectiveness may have been impaired somewhat by not being told more about the true nature of the operation from the beginning.

(S) Most intelligence requirements were formulated by the JTF J-2 in anticipation of JTF needs. Service component requirements came in from the field by message or hard copy courier delivery. Collection requirements [redacted] were usually handled on a face-to-face basis with the liaison representatives, occasionally by secure phone or classified message. Responses were normally by message or other hard copy form and, on occasion, by secure phone.

(S) [redacted] came directly into the JTF from the originating agency--in some cases, directly to one of the Service component forces, [redacted]. The heavy emphasis placed on providing responses to requirements as quickly as possible at times resulted in raw or only partially evaluated reports going directly to planners. When this occurred, intelligence analysts working a specific subject covered by an incoming raw report might become aware of the report's existence only some days after it had been in the hands of JTF planners.

1-11
activity,
source
method

(b)(1)(a)



[redacted] by the time the operation was launched, intelligence support was adequate.

(S) Alternative. The group believes that Intelligence Community assets and resources could have been pulled together more quickly and effectively than was actually the

case. A preferred approach would have been to task the Director, DIA, [redacted] working in concert with DCI, to establish a small and highly select interagency Intelligence Task Force (ITF) in direct support of the JTF from the moment of operational conception.

(b)(5)
(b)(1)(a)(4)

[redacted]

ity

COMJTF would have retained his small intelligence section as an internal element of the JTF; the ITF would have been located externally and would have worked closely and continuously with the JTF J-2. The latter would be COMJTF's close-in intelligence staff officer; the ITF chairman would be his external senior intelligence advisor. ITF members would have been cleared and security briefed at the outset regarding the details of the contemplated operation.

(TS) Implications. The proposed arrangement would have the advantage of harnessing selected elements of the US Intelligence Community and bringing them together as an integrated intelligence supporting mechanism on extremely short notice. Fragmentation of responsibility for intelligence support would be avoided, as the Director, DIA, in his role as J-2 to the Joint Chiefs of Staff, would be clearly charged with overall supervision and given the necessary authority. Coordination of intelligence activities would be simplified by the designation of a single focal point for intelligence matters--the chairman of the ITF. This individual and/or the DIA Director exercising his direct access to the CJCS would be in a position to relieve COMJTF of intelligence management concerns, freeing him to concentrate his attention in other areas.

(TS) Evaluation. Initial difficulties in the intelligence support arena had been largely overcome by the time the operation was launched.

[redacted]

Implementation of the alternative approach to intelligence support for operations of this nature in the future could greatly facilitate achievement of acceptable readiness and forward deployment of forces in situations where time is a critical factor.

~~TOP SECRET~~
~~TOP SECRET~~

(S) This brief summary of intelligence support for the hostage rescue mission could serve as a possible departure point for a more detailed and comprehensive "in-house" review by the Intelligence Community, designed to discern and document procedures and arrangements to more effectively support future operations.

~~TOP SECRET~~
~~TOP SECRET~~

~~TOP SECRET~~
~~SECRET~~

ISSUE 4: (U) Independent review of plans

(TS) Event. Early in the process of planning for the hostage rescue mission, consideration was given to establishing a small group of individuals with credible experience in special operations to act as consultants and review the plan as it developed. Overriding OPSEC concerns and the perceived need to limit as sharply as possible the number of personnel privy to the contemplated operation led to a conscious decision not to form such an element. As a consequence, planners--in effect--reviewed and critiqued their own product for feasibility and soundness as they went along. It is clear that COMJTF was fully aware of the potential disadvantages inherent in this approach and that he took steps to offset and compensate for this organizational defect. For example, each component part of the plan that could be checked and tested on the ground was painstakingly reviewed through training exercises to the extent possible. In this connection it must be noted that on the three occasions when the Joint Chiefs of Staff were briefed on the status and content of the plan, there had been no intervening "scrub-down" or "murder board" of the planning product. Further, for the same OPSEC reasons, the Joint Chiefs of Staff were acting in essence as their own action officers and were denying themselves the staffing support they normally enjoy when reviewing plans of a less sensitive nature. In sum, this meant that the hostage rescue plan was never subjected to rigorous testing and evaluation by qualified, independent observers and monitors short of the Joint Chiefs of Staff themselves.

(U) JTF Rationale. As indicated above, the driving concern to preserve complete OPSEC led to a conscious judgment that avoiding a possible security compromise of a sensitive operation was--on balance--more important than effecting a conceivably minor improvement in the planning effort.

(TS) Alternative. The Special Operations Review Group, on the other hand, inclines to the view that the inclusion of several additional individuals, properly qualified to handle the plans review function on a continuing basis, would have facilitated the planning process without necessarily degrading security. The key would have been the careful selection of individuals for this role. They could have come from the active or retired rolls and might well have included individuals with a nonmilitary background; e.g., a retired senior CIA professional with extensive special operations experience.

This small subordinate cell would have been closeted separately from the JTF planners and used as required by the Joint Chiefs of Staff to subject components of the plan to critical review, to include periodic "worst case" analyses.

(U) Implications. The implications of the group's alternative in the planning area can be simply stated:

(S) On the positive side, it would probably have contributed to a more thoroughly tested and carefully evaluated final plan--indeed, some of the issues now being addressed by the review group might have arisen in sharper focus during the actual planning phase. For instance, to the best of the review group's knowledge, no final plan for the rescue operations was ever published prior to mission execution. A written plan to supplement oral briefings to the Joint Chiefs of Staff would have provided them a document to study and review in the privacy of their own offices, which might have sharpened their understanding of details and led to more incisive questions in subsequent discussions. A properly constituted review group might well have suggested publication of the completed plan, with tight controls and later changes added as necessary, to facilitate an effective review.

(U) On the negative side of the group's alternative, exposure of additional individuals to the plan might have increased the risk of security leaks, inadvertent or otherwise.

(U) Evaluation. Finally, is the issue of existence or nonexistence of a plans review element vital? Could such a unit have contributed materially to the success of the mission? In the review group's judgment, there is little doubt regarding its potential value: A comprehensive and continuing review capability impacts directly on almost all other issues. Such a plans review element could have played an important balancing role in the dynamic planning process that evolved, conceivably making a critical contribution to ultimate mission accomplishment.

ISSUE 5: (U) Comprehensive readiness evaluation

(T) Event. Training was planned and conducted on a highly decentralized basis within an informal component command structure that does not appear to have been clearly established. Individual and unit training was conducted and evaluated throughout the period at widely separated locations,



(b)(1)(a)(1)

1-14
Plans

Combined training of JTF elements was conducted at various desert sites in western CONUS that simulated conditions expected in Iran. Thoroughly integrated training exercises of the entire JTF for the final plan were not conducted, although joint training of all plan segments was conducted by portions of the component forces in conjunction with their respective roles and tasks. Readiness evaluation was based upon observation of the training and exercises and overall assessment of the situation. COMJTF decentralized command supervision of training and evaluation, in part through the use of various advisors individually observing segments of the continuously evolving concept and plans.

(U) JTF Rationale. Several considerations militated against thorough, integrated rehearsals and a more direct command role for COMJTF. The dynamic situation required some mission capability from mid-December 1979 to 24 April 1980. The overall situation, including intelligence and JTF assessment of various unit readiness progress, continuously changed, demanding modifications of concept and subsequent plans, including the roles played by various components. Finally, the primacy of OPSEC considerations led COMJTF to decide that regular integration of training and readiness evaluations was undesirable.

(U) Alternative. The review group would have integrated air, ground, and naval elements throughout the preparation phase to conduct combined training as early and as often as possible. Moreover, integrated training and readiness evaluation for the entire JTF would include specialists and supporting forces, where practical. Individuals, task-oriented groups, and the force itself would drill until every aspect of the raid became an automatic process.

(U) Implications. Thorough, integrated rehearsals would have developed precision and speed in execution, increased interunit coordination, suggested necessary changes, and resolved problem areas. Such integration would have made a major contribution in assessing the impact of plan modifications and evolving roles for individual components. The group's alternative would have facilitated a more searching

~~TOP SECRET~~
~~TOP SECRET~~

assessment of the concept of operations and scheme of maneuver and, of course, a more comprehensive assessment of JTF readiness to execute. The negative implications of the alternative are implicit in the JTF rationale--that such an integrative effort would have endangered OPSEC. Moreover, the dynamic situation and compressed timeframes made such a system extremely difficult to establish. However, the difficulty of integrating training while preserving OPSEC must be measured against the contribution of that effort to mission success.

(U) Evaluation. The criticality of this issue was difficult to assess as only a portion of the plan was executed prior to abort. Nevertheless, the review group concluded that integrated training and rehearsals reduce risk and enhance the probability of success in this or any other special operation.

~~TOP SECRET~~
~~TOP SECRET~~

ISSUE 6: (U) Overall coordination of joint training

(TS) Event. The overall joint training supervision function was retained at JTF level in the Pentagon. At the western US site, coordination and supervision were performed in part by two officers who were advisers to COMJTF yet retained responsibilities related to their primary office of assignment outside the JTF. Neither was responsible for the overall management of joint training activities. Tasking for joint training was accomplished by messages issued by the JTF J-3 from the JTF headquarters in the Pentagon. Principals from the JTF staff proceeded to the western US training site to observe and supervise the directed events. Onsite support was handled individually by force elements in many instances or arranged by the JTF staff. It was related by force participants that C-130 and RH-53D crews did not brief or critique jointly prior to and after every joint training exercise. Briefings and critiques were generally conducted at the respective locations of force elements. Critique results were provided to JTF headquarters by secure telephone, by teletype, or in some instances by personal contact. An example is the C-130 participation, where in some cases the crews did not land at the western US training site for joint face-to-face critiques, but [REDACTED] submitted their critique items. There was limited opportunity for face-to-face exchange of views and problem solving that would have enhanced accomplishment of training objectives; e.g., more training on communications equipment and procedures to assure effective force integration. COMJTF conducted postexercise conferences for the commander and staff a few days following training exercises. These proved very beneficial in determining procedural and equipment problems and areas needing training emphasis.

(b)(1)(a)

1-15
Plans

(U) JTF Rationale. The dynamic nature of the mission concept resulting from new intelligence inputs, availability of support bases for the actual mission, testing of various helicopter refuel procedures, and JTF assessment of unit readiness militated against shifting joint training responsibility to the field. Training exercises were observed personally by COMJTF or his representative. Creating an additional staff element was not considered necessary.

(TS) Alternative. Recognizing that COMJTF had the overall responsibility for training, the myriad other important activities related to concept development, planning, and extensive coordination would indicate the need for assignment of an officer and small staff to be in charge of the very important function of joint training at the western US training site. The group would have designated the

Deputy Commander of the JTF and made him responsible for coordinating joint training activities, including but not limited to training schedules, operational and administrative support, and outside support. He would have made arrangements for joint mission briefings and critiques. He would have submitted progress reports to COMJTF periodically, as appropriate. He could have taken prompt actions to correct deficiencies to the extent possible as they arose. Coordination of training site support would have assured equitable allocation of available assets and contributed positively to morale and overall training progress. Participant interviews indicated a need for better supply and administrative support and more responsive tactical and intelligence briefings. The review group recognizes that joint doctrine assigns the Service component commanders unit training and support responsibilities; however, for this mission, forces were so interdependent that complete force integration was essential.

(TG) Implications. The group would have relieved COMJTF of the burden of day-to-day supervision of training. It would have provided a central point of contact at the training site for each element of the force, as well as for COMJTF and members of the JTF staff. It is believed that the achievement of the training objectives would have been enhanced by an individual responsible for early identification of deficiencies followed by prompt corrective actions. Additional personnel would have been required, but perhaps not more than three or four.

(U) Evaluation. It cannot be stated categorically that adoption of the review group's alternative would have made the difference between mission success or failure. However, centralization of overall joint training responsibility and coordination would have enhanced force readiness and is recommended for future JTF operations involving joint training at a site geographically separated from the JTF headquarters.

ISSUE 7: (U) Alterations in JTF composition

(U) Event. From interviews with key JTF personnel and from detailed review of after-action reports and documents, it has become clear that significant planning and training problems were created by the continuing changes in the overall political situation surrounding the plight of the hostages. The immediate objective in November was to field a capability quickly for an emergency rescue attempt should the hostages seem in imminent danger of being tried and/or executed. Shortly after the first of the year, as a credible rescue capability began to emerge, the emphasis shifted to contemplation of a more deliberate operation at a time and under conditions more conducive to the exercise of US initiative.

1-16
Plans, capabilities
(S) In November, [REDACTED]

(b)(1)(a)(1)

[REDACTED]
as the US Embassy in Tehran was being seized.

The question of how to [REDACTED]
from a hostile environment arose immediately and became the most vexing difficulty COMJTF would face.

(S) In this context, the initial airlift requirement for [REDACTED] and early training involved the number of aircraft needed to meet that requirement. Over time, however, the size of [REDACTED] gradually increased to [REDACTED] contributing to a corresponding increase in the number of helicopters from four to six, to seven, and ultimately to eight, including spares. Positioning the helicopters forward on NIMITZ well in advance of the actual operation was a delicate and time-consuming move, and the failure to fix the size and composition of the assault force [REDACTED] or at a minimum establish a troop lift ceiling, led to late juggling in the numbers of helicopters. This appeared to have exacerbated a problem that, even in early planning stages, was considered the most critical link in the entire operation.

(S) JTF Rationale. The obvious JTF rationale for such incremental changes in force structure was to provide as finely tailored a capability as possible at the point of attack. Minor corrections and additions as planning progressed and further experience was gained from training and rehearsals

~~TOP SECRET~~

were considered necessary improvements and appropriate responses to the dynamics of the situation. Further, to a large extent, intelligence drove the operation from the outset, and intelligence developments caused modifications in the operational concept.

(b)(1)(a)(1)
(b)(1)(a)(4)

1-16
1-17

[REDACTED]

plans activities

(TS) Alternative. Nonetheless, as can be inferred from the discussion above, it would have been desirable to fix the airlift requirement at a certain ceiling well in advance of launch date and to hold that ceiling for planning purposes unless a compelling case could have been made that a given increase was indeed vital to insure mission accomplishment. For example,

(b)(1)(a)(1)

1-16

plans

ceiling of, say, 100 personnel in early January, to have remained constant for planning purposes from that point on. If the flexibility provided by [REDACTED] necessary, it would have been preferable that such a limit be established in January vice the ongoing fluctuations that occurred.

(TS) Implications. Adoption of the group's course of action would have facilitated greater precision in rehearsals, a more finely tuned final plan with fewer last-minute changes, and a clearer and more carefully computed airlift requirement further in advance of launch date than was the case in the actual operation. In this particular case, it was virtually impossible for COMJTF to fix a firm date because the rescue effort was essentially a response, not an initiative. The rescue operation was a last resort to be used only after diplomatic efforts failed.

(b)(1)(a)(1)
(b)(1)(a)(4)

1-16

1-17

conclusions source

[REDACTED]. Fixing a date and force structure may have been highly desirable; it may not have been possible to adhere to such planning, especially when the terminal situation is dictated by the enemy.

(TS) Further, too rigid planning could have had the effect of reducing the JTF's flexibility to respond to last-minute changes in the situation, be they diplomatic [REDACTED], operational [REDACTED] or enemy initiated [REDACTED].

(b)(1)(a)(1)
(b)(1)(a)(5)

1-16

1-18

plans activities

(U) Evaluation. A commander is always tempted to make any adjustments possible to improve his posture up to the point when the battle is joined. The review group would simply counsel that, particularly in undertakings of a special operations nature in the future, such late changes be made with some trepidation and extraordinary care. Whether the issue of late changes and increases in force structure impacted unfavorably on the operation, as far as it went, is problematical.

ISSUE 8: (U) Risk assessment of hostile SIGINT capabilities

(TS) Event. Analysis of operational communications planning, training, and execution, coupled with detailed interviews with key personnel, underscored JTF understanding of the need for COMSEC, particularly transmission security. The principles of signals security (SIGSEC) were vital, well understood by the JTF, and provided for in the JTF Communications-Electronics Operating Instruction (CEOI) extract utilized by the force. However, it was clear that threat understanding and resultant radio procedures varied among units and probably resulted from a combination of knowledge, training, experience, and mind-set. For example, the helicopter force attempted to execute the NIMITZ-to-Desert One phase under strict radio silence, even when faced with contingencies such as the suspended dust/zero visibility problem and the search and rescue (SAR) recovery of Helicopter #6. Conversely, the C-130 force, [redacted] and Helicopter #8 did transmit at various times.

(b)(1)(a)(1)
(b)(1)(a)(2)

Plans, 1-19
with capabilities
1-19
1-20

Plans
with capabilities
activity

[redacted]

(b)(1)(a)(1)
(b)(1)(a)(2)
(b)(1)(a)(4)

[redacted]

(b)(1)(a)
(b)(1)(a)
(b)(1)(a)(4)

1-19
1-20

[REDACTED]

*Plans,
Plan
capabilities,
activity
method*

(S) The helicopter unit commander and his plane commanders maintained strict radio silence during extreme operational difficulties in maintaining integrity and control. Additionally, the commander of #5 was not told--nor did he ask--about the weather at Desert One. The receipt of this information by the commander of Helicopter #5 could have caused him to proceed on the mission.

(S) JTF Rationale. The JTF rationale concerning SIGSEC/COMSEC policy was driven by the requirement for total OPSEC--from initiation of planning to assault [REDACTED] and by the assessment of the SIGSEC situation.

(S) Alternative. The group's alternative would insure a comprehensive assessment and detailed understanding of threat capabilities by every member of the force, to include impacts and consequences. [REDACTED]

1-21

[REDACTED]

(b)(5)

1-19
1-20
1-21

Plans,
unit
capabilities,
unit
vulnerabilities
systems
capabilities,
system
vulnerabilities,
activity,
source
method

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

(b)(1)(a)(1)
(b)(1)(a)(2)
(b)(1)(a)(1)
(b)(5)

1-19
1-20
1-21

*Plans,
and
capabilities,
systems
capabilities,
activity,
sources
method*

[REDACTED]

(b)(1)(a)(1)
(b)(1)(a)(2)
(b)(1)(a)(4)
(b)(5)

[REDACTED]

(S) Implications. The group's alternative would have insured, insofar as possible, that all personnel thoroughly understood the COMSEC requirements and consequences. Further, it appeared that command and control through selected use of radio communications could well have resulted in a more favorable execution of the movement to Desert One. On the other hand, total radio silence or the strictest of procedures always enhances OPSEC.

(S) Evaluation. It is difficult to determine if the overall posture at Desert One at abort decision point would have been enhanced by additional command and control communications at critical points. Commanders and key personnel have many things to consider in times of stress and uncertainty. Nevertheless, the group would urge comprehensive analysis, assessment, and training in matters of SIGSEC operations and planning,

[REDACTED]

ISSUE 9: (U) Abort criteria

(TS) Event. During the flight from the carrier to Desert One, a distance of nearly 600 nm, the helicopter force unexpectedly encountered visibility conditions that precluded VMC flight. The condition was caused by two separate areas of suspended dust of unknown magnitude. This condition occurred approximately three hours after takeoff. Flight integrity was lost. The helicopters broke out of the first area but soon entered the second area, which was of even greater density. The helicopter flight flew in instrument meteorological conditions (IMC) for approximately two hours. The restricted visibility ended at a point approximately 50 nm from destination. The plan had been to conduct the entire mission under VMC, a procedure adopted during the training phase.

[REDACTED]

(b)(1)(a)(1)
(b)(1)(a)(2)

1-22
no copies
copy of [unclear]
system
copy of [unclear]
system
submarine [unclear]

The minimum visibility conditions for the operational requirements of this mission were not defined or tested.

(TS) Two helicopters, including the leading helicopter, turned to exit the first area of dust and landed. The leader, using a special radio that afforded minimum chance of intercept, called COMJTF and told him what the flight had encountered. The radio call could not be heard by other members of the flight. In response to query by COMJTF, the leader indicated he thought that it was possible to continue the mission despite the dust. He was directed to continue. One aircraft, Helicopter #5, at the time not in visual contact with other aircraft, aborted short of destination and returned to NIMITZ a few minutes before he would have exited the dust condition. He based his abort decision on the instrument malfunctions exacerbated by the visibility conditions. The crew commander indicated later that he would have continued had he known that restricted visibility conditions did not prevail at destination. His failure to arrive at Desert One proved critical in that one additional mission-capable aircraft would have permitted the entire mission to continue. The flight leader was not informed of #5's decision to abort. Strict radio silence inhibited exchange of essential information within the helicopter flight when unexpected contingencies arose.

(TS) The visibility conditions caused the helicopters to be as much as 85 minutes late at Desert One. This in itself could have been a cause for mission abort based on total hours of darkness remaining for the next phase.

(TS) JTF Rationale. There was a tendency to feel that an abort decision could best be made by the element leader based on his experience and professional knowledge. Moreover, the helicopter flight leader believed that no more precise abort criteria were necessary for his individual flight members. The absence of positive communications procedures reflected the primacy of OPSEC in all mission planning. The helicopter crews demonstrated a strong dedication toward mission accomplishment by their reluctance to abort under unusually difficult conditions.

(TS) Alternative. Considering the helicopter's limited IMC capabilities (based primarily on equipment limitations) and in the absence of comprehensive weather penetration procedures, the group would have established firm weather criteria for mission abort.

[REDACTED]

(b)(1)(a)(1)
(b)(1)(a)(2)
(b)(5)

1-22
1-23

*How to
communicate
Plan
communication*

The helicopter flight leader could have retained control by use of visual signals to the extent possible and by use of radio when necessary, OPSEC notwithstanding. He would have made abort decisions based on established criteria and circumstances and would have aborted the entire flight if helicopter assets fell below minimum requirements to proceed to the next phase of the mission. In addition to the weather criteria, others based on an acceptable degree of punctuality were necessary to assure timely arrival of a minimum number of helicopters at Desert One. An absolute minimum of six were required for the next phase, and prudence would dictate arrival of at least seven.

(TS) Directly related to sound abort criteria is a procedure to assure that communications equipment is functional. In strict radio silence, an aircrew could be completely unaware that a radio had ceased functioning. A procedure for periodic blind radio transmissions would have served as an equipment check for all net members.

[REDACTED]

(TS) Implications. The negative implications of the group's alternative include the possibility that severely restrictive abort criteria could have limited individual initiative and the success orientation necessary to mission success. On the positive side, the review group's method would have provided positive management of mission assets.

~~TOP SECRET~~
~~TOP SECRET~~

(TC) Evaluation. Positive abort procedures could have enhanced the capability of the helicopter flight leader to maintain flight integrity and control. Likewise, COMJTF could have been better informed regarding the status of the helicopter force as the mission progressed toward Desert One. His ability to make a well-informed decision could have been enhanced. However, it cannot be stated categorically that adoption of the group's alternative would have assured success beyond Desert One. Even though six helicopters and seven crews arrived at the intended destination under the difficult conditions that prevailed, they proved insufficient to proceed further. If all six helicopters had been mission capable, the delayed takeoff for the next phase could well have jeopardized success and resulted in a more serious situation. The national significance of this operation demanded adoption of, and adherence to, extraordinary procedures designed to deal with relatively remote contingencies.

~~TOP SECRET~~
~~TOP SECRET~~

ISSUE 10: (U) The use of other helicopters

(S) Event. Initial study of the Iranian situation and forces available quickly led to the belief that a rescue attempt would require heavy-lift, long-range helicopters. On 19 November 1979, the CJCS approved development of a plan using helicopters [REDACTED]

(b)(1)(a)(1)
(b)(1)(a)(2)

The RH-53D was selected after an in-depth review of available helicopter resources and their inherent capabilities.

(S) JTF Rationale. Primary criteria for selection included range, payload, and ability to be positioned rapidly; i.e., airliftable. Other major considerations were suitability of candidate helicopters to carrier operations and OPSEC. Primary candidates for the rescue mission were the CH-46, CH-47, CH-53, RH-53, and HH-53 military helicopters. All were C-5 airliftable, but range and payload considerations favored the -53 series. Of the latter, the RH-53D provided the best combination of range, payload, and shipboard compatibility. [REDACTED]

1-24
Plans,
Systems
Capabilities,
Capabilities,
Weapons

(S) Alternative. Selection of the RH-53D for all the reasons given was correct. However, [REDACTED] helicopters should have been favorably considered as primary replacements [REDACTED]

(b)(5)

[REDACTED] helicopters were just coming off the production line, only a handful of pilots were proficient in flying them and operating their sophisticated systems, and they carry less payload than the RH-53D. In addition, reliability and maintainability of such a sophisticated system was doubtful at this early stage of its introduction. [REDACTED]

1-25

(S) Implications. On the positive side, [redacted]

(b)(1)(a)(1)
(b)(1)(a)(2)

1-24
1-25

*weapons,
systems
capabilities*

[redacted] ability
[redacted] Considering that
at the time there were no practical alternatives to launching
the helicopter force from a carrier, the negative implications
of the group's alternative are the deciding factor. [redacted]
[redacted] helicopter will not fit into a carrier elevator
or below decks without removal of its rotor blades--a procedure
not recommended for daily operations. [redacted]
[redacted] on deck is virtually infeasible because of the
corrosive atmosphere; difficulty of maintenance; impact
on carrier operations; and, above all, OPSEC. Logistic
support of a relatively new and exotic weapon system would
be further complicated by the additional delays in
shipboard resupply.

(S) Evaluation. During the planning process, the RH-53D
emerged as the only helicopter with the full combination
of operational capabilities upon which a feasible rescue
plan could be structured.

ISSUE 11: (U) Helicopter force size

(S) Event. Approximately two weeks after US Embassy personnel in Iran were taken hostage, [redacted] six RH-53D SEA STALLION helicopters to the Indian Ocean, reflecting the fact that their use in the event of a possible rescue attempt had already been correctly anticipated. The helicopters were [redacted] the carrier KITTY HAWK, and eventually transferred to the carrier NIMITZ when she arrived on station. These six, augmented by two more brought in on NIMITZ, launched on 24 April in support of the rescue operation. The mission was aborted on the morning of 25 April because the number of RH-53D helicopters available to proceed was less than required.

(b)(1)(a)(1)
(b)(1)(a)(3)

1-26
Plans
Capabilities
Augment
Capabilities

(S) JTF Rationale. As planning for the rescue progressed, the number of helicopters perceived necessary to execute the mission grew from four, to six, to seven, and eventually to eight. These incremental increases were the result of unforeseen growth in the force believed necessary to achieve an acceptable probability of success in assaulting the Embassy and freeing the hostages. In addition, more helicopters were required to compensate for the lift capability lost because of seasonal temperature increases in the objective areas. Moreover, as intelligence on the situation in Iran crystallized, planners were driven to a concept embodying an in-country rendezvous for helicopter refueling and unloading of the assault force.

(S) The JTF decision on helicopter requirements was based on the collective professional judgment of highly experienced helicopter pilots participating in rescue mission planning. A risk analysis based on fleet-wide RH-53D statistical data for an 18-month period from 1 July 1978 to 31 December 1979 seemed to support the planners' conclusion that eight RH-53D helicopters aboard NIMITZ provided an acceptable degree of risk. Moreover, the always-primary OPSEC concern apparently influenced the planners' rationale, driving them to seek minimum practical force levels. In hindsight, it is clear that the eight helicopters put aboard NIMITZ provided adequate redundancy to airlift the initial assault force [redacted] perhaps 100 personnel (four to five RH-53Ds departing Desert One). However, as personnel and equipment grew in response to evolving intelligence, the minimum airlift requirement at Desert One increased.

(TS) Alternative. The review group concluded that additional helicopters and crews would have reduced the risk of abort due to mechanical failure, were operationally feasible, and could have been made available if requested [REDACTED]

(b)(1)(A)(1)
(b)(1)(A)(2)
(b)(5)

26
27

*was
not
a
factor*

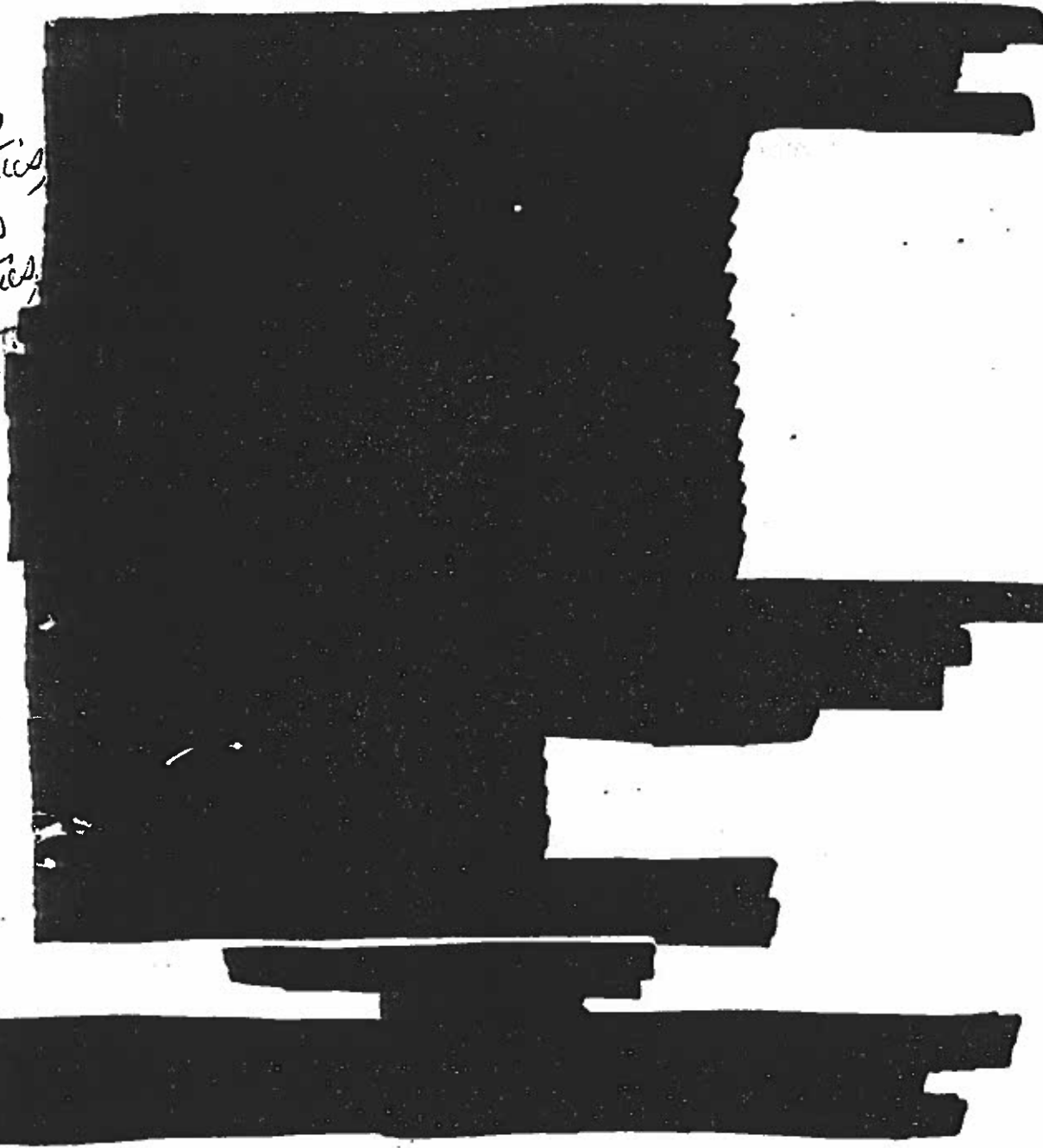
A detailed analysis of the helicopter risk, focusing on maintenance reliability, is provided in Annex E, and the conclusions reached therein are summarized here. As indicated in Figure 1, an unconstrained planner would more than likely have initially required at least 10 helicopters under JTF combat rules, 11 under the most likely case, and up to 12 using peacetime historical data. These figures do not deal with accidents, combat losses, etc., which, depending on the mission profile, could drive initial requirements higher. The threat posed to OPSEC by additional helicopters and support aircraft was a principal concern; however, other possible constraints did not prohibit such an increase. NIMITZ was capable of unloading [REDACTED] helicopters with little or no impact on other missions. The last two mission pilots were trained and certified in a [REDACTED] March, indicating that aircrew availability did not limit the force. By reducing the contingency margin, fuel available at Desert One was sufficient to accommodate at least 10 helicopters [REDACTED]

[REDACTED] In sum, aside from OPSEC, no operational or logistic factor prohibited launching 11 from NIMITZ and continuing beyond the halfway point to Desert One with 10 helicopters. [REDACTED]

(TS) Implications. The negative implications of this alternative includes abandoning more helicopters in Iran, an increased threat to OPSEC generated by additional aircraft, and a reduction in contingency fuel at Desert One. However, an increase in the helicopter force, coupled with a reduction of contingency fuel levels, would not have required additional forces in other areas and would not have significantly altered the footprint of the mission. On the positive side, the group's alternative would have decreased the probability that the number of mission-capable helicopters would fall below the required minimum.

1-26
1-27

*plans,
capabilities,
systems
capabilities,
systems,
incidents*



(b)(1)(a)(1)
(b)(1)(a)(2)
(b)(5)



~~TOP SECRET~~
~~TOP SECRET~~

(S) Evaluation. The number of mission-capable helicopters available at Desert One was critical to allowing the mission to proceed. It is too simplistic to suggest that adding more helicopters would have reduced the likelihood of the mission aborting due to mechanical failure. The problematic advantages of an increased helicopter force must be balanced against the increased threat posed to OPSEC throughout the continuum of training, deployment, and execution and the reduced contingency fuel reserve at Desert One. In retrospect, it appears that on balance an increase in the helicopter force was warranted; however, such an increase could not itself guarantee success.

~~TOP SECRET~~
~~TOP SECRET~~

ISSUE 12: (U) Alternate helicopter pilots

1-28
Alene

(TS) Event. At the outset, with the fate of the hostages unknown and unpredictable, an immediate capability to mount a possible rescue attempt was mandatory. Although a residue of similar capability from the Vietnam conflict existed, it was not intact; therefore, it was expedient to select an integral unit [redacted] proficient in the RH-53D and carrier operations. To bolster [redacted] night assault capability, Navy pilots were paired with Marine Corps pilots versed in assault missions. In this crew configuration, training progress was viewed as unsatisfactory by COMJTF. As a result, pilots progressing slowly were released in late December 1979, and USN/USMC pilots known to have demonstrated capabilities more akin to the mission were recruited. Training in preparation for the rescue progressed more rapidly with the revised crews, and no further wholesale aircrew changes were made or contemplated. (b)(1)(a)(1)

(TS) JTF Rationale. The need to be ready at any moment precluded a smooth program designed to achieve a specific capability by 24 April 1980. The requirement to be ready when windows of opportunity opened resulted not in one five-month training program, but several discrete two- or three-week programs--shingled, one overlapping the other.

(TS) Alternative. During this period, USAF pilot resources included 114 qualified H-53 pilots, instructors, and flight examiners. Of these, 96 were current in long-range flight and aerial refueling. In addition, there were another 86 former H-53 qualified pilots identified, most of whom had fairly recent Special Operations Forces (SOF) or rescue experience. These USAF pilots, more experienced in the mission profiles envisioned for the rescue operation, would have probably progressed more rapidly than pilots proficient in the basic weapons system but trained in a markedly different role. USAF pilots, as well as those from other Services, with training and operational experience closely related to the rescue mission profile could have been identified and made available. The real question to be addressed is: is transition to a new and highly complex mission in the same aircraft more or less difficult for an experienced pilot to master than transition to an aircraft variant in the same mission? Mastering a new, difficult, and complex mission requires a pilot to acquire and hone new skills and, more importantly, a new mind-set.

Transitioning from an HH- or CH-53 to an RH-53 requires only learning a few new flight parameters and slightly altering already established procedures, something every experienced pilot has done several times. This point is not new. Experience gained in Project "Jungle Jim" (circa 1961) illustrated that learning new and vastly different complex mission skills is far more difficult than transitioning to an aircraft of similar design and performance characteristics.

(S) Implications. Teaming carefully selected pilots of all Services, with a heavy weight on USAF SOF/rescue and USMC assault experience, would most likely have produced the most competent crews at an earlier date. However, introduction of large numbers of USAF pilots would have complicated the OPSEC problem in training and aboard the carrier.

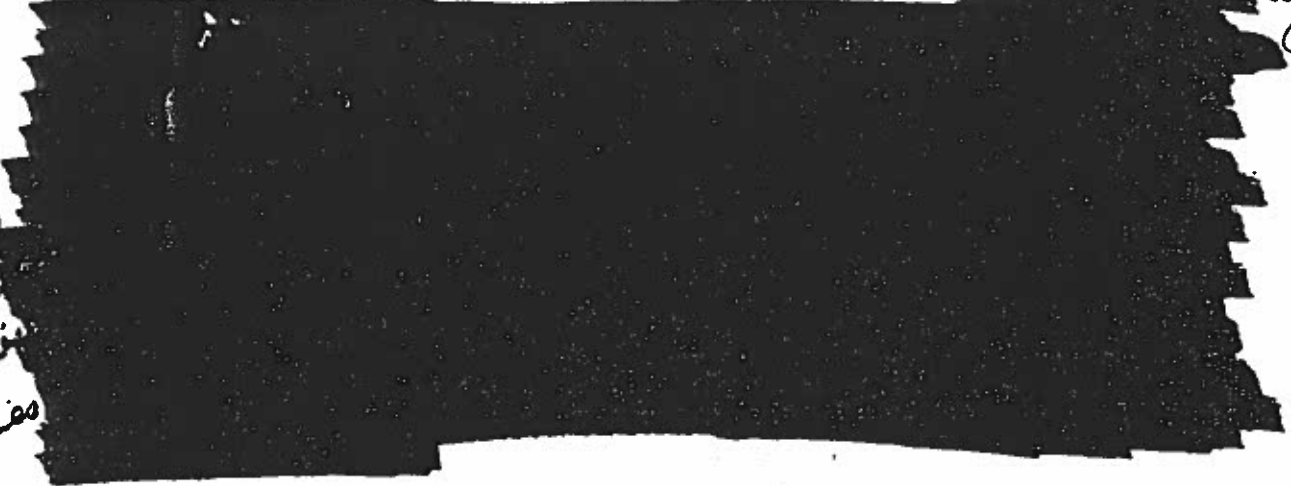
(S) Evaluation. Should a rescue mission have been attempted in the early days after the Embassy seizure, it is probable that a complement of selected pilots with extensive or current assault and rescue experience would have been more effective. However, there is nothing to suggest that any other combination of aircrews could or would have performed the mission better than those who flew it on 24 April 1980. While this issue was not crucial to the mission, it does indicate the importance of designating an operational helicopter unit responsible for maintaining mission capability in this area.

ISSUE 13: (U) Established helicopter unit

~~(TS)~~ Event. Selection of the RH-53D helicopter for the rescue mission naturally led to selection of [redacted] an RH-53D squadron, as the unit to perform the mission.

(b)(1)(a)(1)
(b)(1)(a)(2)

1-29
own
operational
in
and
capabilities
with
insulation



~~(TS)~~ JTF Rationale. The JTF was driven to prepare for imminent launch of a rescue mission if the hostages' lives were threatened. Accordingly, they selected a minesweeping helicopter squadron as the most expedient solution when it became evident the RH-53D was the helicopter to use.

~~(TS)~~ Alternative. The group would marry up the appropriate helicopters and their maintenance capability with an operational unit compatible with mission requirements. When it was clear that RH-53D helicopters were required, selection of a USMC assault squadron would have facilitated training and in constructing a credible OPSEC cover story. If necessary, highly qualified pilots from other Services could have augmented the Marine squadron to bolster its capability. The main point is that the squadron's institutional structure would be preserved; e.g., training, tactics, and standardization. Personnel performing and experienced in these functions would greatly enhance the unit's ability to smoothly transition into its new role. Perhaps one of the key squadron staff functions referenced above would have perceived the Blade Inspection Method (BIM)-associated abort experienced during training as a major potential cause of abort during the mission and pursued the facts as the review group did. (See Issue 17.) Armed with knowledge of the circumstances surrounding BIM failures, the pilots of Helicopter #6 could have reached a more informed decision on the risk associated with continuing.

(TS) Implications. The negative aspect of the group's alternative is the additional personnel required to preserve vital elements of the selected squadron's structure. Perhaps as many as five or six additional personnel would have been required. The positive aspect is the benefits gained in preserving unit integrity vital to flying training and operations.

(TS) Evaluation. It is believed that the preservation of an established squadron's inherent unit cohesion could have facilitated training, enhanced information flow, and increased aircrew knowledge, all of which could lead to a more integrated unit operation. It cannot be demonstrated nor is it suggested that these factors would have altered the outcome. However, they would have enhanced training and more than likely increased the chance of success. For the future, appropriate units with the requisite equipment should be identified to develop and maintain the necessary skills at a high level of proficiency.

ISSUE 14: (U) Handling the dust phenomenon

(TS) Event. There was serious and justifiable concern with the ability to accurately forecast weather along planned low-level routes to Desert One. Helicopters planned to ingress and navigate visually over a sparsely populated desert with few weather stations. None of these reporting stations were located along their route. Therefore, the JTF had to develop a catalog of weather phenomena that could likely occur in Iran and the ability to accurately and reliably forecast their occurrence. Difficulty of accurate weather prediction was compounded by the need to accurately forecast Iranian weather that could meet required minimums for a 40-hour period to accommodate the planned two-night operation. Diplomatic initiative, moon phase, and other "windows" exacerbated the problem. The JTF weather team researched and identified hazardous weather that aircrews could encounter in Iran. Among these was the phenomenon of suspended dust actually encountered along a 200-nm stretch of the helicopter route. Information extracted from the National Intelligence Survey (NIS 33, 34 - Iran and Afghanistan) July 1970 was eventually included in the OPLAN weather annex. A table in the annex indicated, by location and month, the frequency of suspended-dust occurrences. Helicopter pilots, however, were surprised when they encountered the dust, were unprepared to accurately assess its impact on their flight, and stated that they were not advised of the phenomenon. MC/EC-130 pilots were also unaware of the possibility of encountering suspended dust.

(TS) JTF Rationale. The AWS team was assigned to the JTF J-2 section and did not have direct contact with the helicopter and C-130 aircrews. Weather information was passed through an intelligence officer to the pilots on regular visits to the training sites. However, pilots with extensive C-130 and H-53 experience on the JTF J-5 section had direct access to AWS personnel. Information flow to the mission pilots was filtered as a result of organizational structure. The traditional relationship between pilots and weather forecasters was severed. This was done to enhance OPSEC.

(TS) Alternative. The question to be addressed is not where the fault lay for the lack of aircrew knowledge but, more importantly, what should be done in future situations where there exists a paucity of weather information and the

price of failure is high. Air Weather Service meteorologists can be denied information in several ways: (1) a closed society does not release information; (2) the phenomenon is so infrequent that it had never before been observed in recorded history (e.g., Mount St. Helen's ash); or (3) the area of interest is so sparsely populated that although the phenomenon occurs frequently, and perhaps predictably, it is not observed by "civilized" inhabitants and therefore not recorded. The suspended dust encountered along the helicopter route falls more appropriately into the third category. If they were fully aware of the high degree of uncertainty associated with limited data and the attendant risk, mission planners should have more aggressively pursued options that reduced this uncertainty to a manageable and acceptable degree. One cannot build a data base overnight; it takes years of observations to accurately and reliably predict weather patterns. Therefore, active measures could have been pursued, [REDACTED]

(b)(1)(a)(1)

1-31
1-32

Plans, capabilities

[REDACTED] Of equal importance, the interplay of meteorologist and operator is the process that most often surfaces the questions that need to be answered--the uncertainties that size risk. In this regard, the AWS had little or no direct interface with the mission pilots--they were both exclusively compartmented. By and large, an intelligence officer passed weather information to the pilots. Operators were placed in a receive only mode--forecasters and weather researchers received no direct feedback. The group would have required direct interface between mission pilots and their supporting weather team.

(b)(5)
↓

(16) Implications. The negative aspects of the review group's alternative impact on OPSEC and administrative procedures. The AWS officer would have had to make frequent trips to the training sites for direct interface, or a second weather officer could have been [REDACTED]

[REDACTED] It is unlikely that either of these alternatives would have compromised OPSEC. On the other hand, there is no assurance that face-to-face interaction would have surfaced the dust phenomenon or made pilots more aware. However, the group believes that direct interface between mission pilots and air weather officers would have increased the likelihood of foreknowledge of the suspended dust phenomenon, that informed planners would have more aggressively pursued alternative approaches to reduce and manage this uncertainty, and that pilots encountering the suspended dust would have been better prepared.

(S) Evaluation. The potential for increased awareness of weather phenomenon through better interface with the AWS team on the planning staff must be weighed against the possible OPSEC risk. While it is unlikely that direct interface between AWS personnel and mission pilots could have altered the outcome on the night of 24 April, it is possible that helicopter pilots would have gained insight into the dust phenomenon and might well have made a better informed decision when they encountered it. For example, a decision to abort would have preserved the option to launch the mission at an opportune point [REDACTED]. The larger issue for future consideration is the need for planners to be more sensitive to areas of great uncertainty that could impact significantly on the planned operation and, where possible, to reduce these uncertainties. For this mission, all planning envisioned flight conditions permitting visual navigation. Yet weather was an uncertain factor, which would lead to the conclusion that the chances for successful helicopter ingress would have been enhanced by any and all means that would have improved the helicopters' (and their crews') capabilities to penetrate adverse weather.

(-3)

(b)(1)(a)(1)

ISSUE 15: (U) Weather reconnaissance

(TS) Event. There was serious and justifiable concern about the ability to accurately forecast weather along planned low-level routes to Desert One and the extraction site and less concern about forecast accuracy for Tehran because of the availability of weather predictions for major international airports. Moreover, weather stations, of which there are several near Tehran, report their observations in the clear. On the other hand, the helicopters would ingress over sparsely populated desert with few stations reporting, and none along their specific route. Forecasting difficulty was compounded by the need to predict acceptable weather for a two-day period. Accordingly, an AWS team was formed to gather data on Iran. It was tasked to forecast Iranian weather on a regular basis, and its predictions were checked for accuracy and reliability by comparing them with actual reports and weather photos of the forecasted period. Over time, the team's ability to forecast with accuracy and reliability was validated by the JTF. Primary interest was focused on visibility, hazards to flight such as storms, ambient light and winds for navigation, and timing. Satellite imagery was extremely useful but incapable of revealing the presence of low-level clouds or other restrictions to visibility hidden beneath an overcast and was of limited value at night. Nevertheless, there was evidently sufficient confidence in the forecaster's ability to predict VMC and the frequency of VMC that alternative means to VFR flight procedures were not pursued. The weather forecast for the night of 24 April did not predict reduced visibility over extended distances of the helicopter route. Uninformed and unprepared to cope with the extremely low visibilities encountered, the leader paused, the flight became separated, Helicopter #5 aborted, and all helicopters reaching Desert One were appreciably late.

(TS) JTF Rationale. The JTF believed that the probability of VMC for the helicopter ingress was reasonably high and that the AWS team could accurately forecast the en route weather. Therefore, the helicopter ingress would be accomplished by visual navigation using night vision goggles. If the helicopters encountered weather that could not safely be penetrated using visual navigation with night vision goggles, the flight-- and mission--would be aborted. The use of a weather reconnaissance aircraft had the disadvantage of being one more sortie over the helicopter route that could arouse attention. This risk to OPSEC was considered to override any advantage to be gained, in view of what appeared to a simple and straightforward approach to handling weather contingencies.

(TS) Alternative. COMJTF and his air component staff had the means to obtain more timely and accurate weather data. Weather reconnaissance is a proven and often used means of accurately determining weather along flight routes with a paucity of weather reporting stations and high risk of incomplete knowledge. Transoceanic fighter deployments are a classic example. It was feasible for the first MC-130 TALON aircraft penetrating Iranian air space to fly the helicopter route in advance. If deemed necessary, a weather forecaster and/or a helicopter pilot could have gone along to assess and report the impact of weather encountered. In hindsight, a weather reconnaissance MC-130 would have encountered the dust phenomenon approximately one hour in advance of the helicopters and assessed its magnitude and impact before the helicopters would have to penetrate the area of reduced visibility. It is purely conjecture at this point, but full knowledge of what the helicopters would encounter, balanced against their planning and training for VMC flight, may have caused COMJTF to order an abort. Although useful in a macro sense, satellite weather imagery often has proven to be neither accurate nor timely enough to meet operational requirements on a high-risk mission. It is therefore believed that information provided by an MC-130 weather reconnaissance of the RH-53D route could have reduced the risk margin.

(TS) Implications. On the negative side, the C-130 would have been one more sortie overflying the helicopter route and could have alerted ground watchers so that the helicopter flight would have been visually detected. On the positive side, weather reconnaissance could have provided COMJTF with more accurate and timely information on which to base a decision on whether or not to abort that night and try again within the available [REDACTED]

1-33
conjecture

(b)(1)(a)(1)

(TS) Evaluation. A TALON weather reconnaissance along the exact helicopter route would have provided COMJTF with precise information on the prevailing weather, and influenced a decision to continue at that juncture or to wait for more favorable conditions. The group considered that provisions for handling weather contingencies could and should have been enhanced. The weather reconnaissance was one option that cost nothing in additional aircraft, fuel, or crew requirements, although there were OPSEC implications.

ISSUE 16: (U) C-130 pathfinders

(TS) Event. During flight from respective launch points to Desert One, the MC- and EC-130s made landfall in the same general vicinity and at approximately the same time as the helicopters.

[REDACTED]

(b)(1)(a)(1)
(b)(1)(a)(2)

1-35
ins, measures, system capabilities, terrain

The helicopter force was much more austere prepared for long-range, low-level night navigation. Their crews did not include navigators, and the aircraft were not equipped with TFR or FLIR. They were equipped with the PINS and OMEGA system, [REDACTED]. The crews had received only limited training and expressed low confidence in the equipment and their ability to employ it.

[REDACTED]

The primary method of navigation for the helicopters was dead reckoning using NVGs to terrain follow.

(TS) There was serious and justifiable concern about the ability to accurately forecast weather along planned low-level routes to Desert One and the extraction site. There was understandably somewhat less concern about forecast accuracy for Tehran because weather predictions for major international airports were readily available. Moreover, weather stations, of which there were several near Tehran, report their observations in the clear. The route from the coastal penetration to Desert One was over sparsely populated desert with few stations reporting and none along the route. Forecasting difficulty was compounded by the need to predict the weather for a two-day period. Accordingly, a weather team was formed to gather data on Iran. It was tasked to forecast Iranian weather on a regular basis. The predictions were checked for accuracy and reliability by comparing them with actual reports and weather photos of the forecast period. Over time, the team's ability to forecast with accuracy and reliability was validated to the JTF's satisfaction. Primary interest was focused on visibility and hazards to flight such as storms, ambient light and winds for navigation, and timing. Satellite imagery was useful but incapable of revealing the presence of low-level clouds hidden beneath a higher level and was of limited value at night. There was evidently sufficient confidence in the forecaster's ability to predict VMC and the frequency

[REDACTED]

of VMC that alternative means to VFR flight were not pursued. The weather forecast for the night of 24 April did not predict reduced visibility over extended distances of the helicopter route. Uninformed and therefore not well prepared to cope with the extremely low visibilities encountered, the leader paused, the flight became separated, Helicopter #5 aborted, and all helicopters reaching Desert One were appreciably late.

(S) JTF Rationale. With limitations of the navigation equipment available in the RH-53D, the JTF gained confidence in the ability of helicopter crews to navigate over long distance at night under VMC using NVGs during the training phase in the western United States. The JTF was comfortable that weather would not be a limiting factor for mission success because of the predicted high frequency of VMC along the helicopter route. Use of an MC-130 pathfinder for the helicopters was not considered because of the confidence in the high probability of VMC weather and because of the feeling that the use of a C-130 pathfinder would be therefore unnecessarily complicating, especially with the wide difference in operating airspeeds.

(S) Alternative. The alternative plan would provide for an MC-130/helicopter rendezvous at or just after landfall.

[REDACTED]

(b)(1)(a)(1)
(b)(1)(a)(2)
(b)(5)

-35
-36
plans
incorporate
Seytan
consider
Seytan
incorporate

(S) TALON C-130 aircraft are capable of flying at speeds compatible with RH-53D helicopters and acting as pathfinders for them.

[REDACTED]

1-35

(S) Implications. Using TALONS as pathfinders from the point of entry into Iran to Desert One would have increased

(b)(1)(a)(1)
(b)(1)(a)(2)

[REDACTED] fuel consumption would be somewhat compensated for by a greater assurance that the helicopters would arrive and arrive on time, thus requiring shorter ground times for C-130s and helicopters.

[REDACTED]

(b)(5)

(S) Evaluation. TALON pathfinders for the RH-53Ds would have increased the probability of all flyable helicopters arriving at Desert One on time regardless of unforeseen weather along the route short of a major storm.

(b)(5)

[REDACTED] In retrospect, pathfinders would most likely have enabled Helicopter #5 to reach Desert One and the mission to proceed. Moreover, pathfinders might have averted the fuel situation that arose due to late arriving helicopters. In addition, if existing weather along the route had been of such severity to make it prudent to discontinue the mission, pathfinders could have contributed to a better informed early decision, preserving the option to delay by one or more days.

1-35
Plans,
windows,
systems
instruments
1-36
systems
instruments

1-36

~~TOP SECRET~~

ISSUE 17: (U) Helicopter aborts

(S) Event. Eight mission-capable RH-53D helicopters departed NIMITZ on the evening of 24 April 1980. Of these eight, only five arrived at Desert One capable of proceeding. One helicopter aborted in the Iranian desert short of Desert One, another turned back for loss of instruments due to electrical power failure, and a third RH-53D aborted at Desert One as the result of a hydraulic leak that in turn failed a primary hydraulic pump. Because only five helicopters were available to proceed against a firm minimum requirement of six, the rescue mission was aborted. Accordingly, a post-mission analysis of the aborts was warranted.

(S) JTF Rationale. Helicopter #6, the first abort, experienced a BIM indication approximately two hours into the flight. RH-53 rotor blade spars are pressurized with nitrogen, and the spar's ability to retain the nitrogen under pressure is an indication of spar integrity. A BIM warning indicates possible loss of nitrogen pressure in the blade but does not necessarily indicate that the pressure loss is the result of a crack in the spar. Nitrogen pressure loss can result from a leaky filler valve, a defective seal on the spar extrusion, or a crack in the spar that can ultimately result in rotor blade failure. The crew of #6 made a precautionary landing in the desert to investigate, verified the cockpit indication with the BIM indicator on the rotor blade, and based on normal operating procedures elected to abandon the helicopter. With regard to spar failures, the CH/HH-53 helicopter family has experienced 31 spar cracks, three of which have resulted in crashes. However, the RH-53D, equipped with an improved cockpit detection system, has not experienced a spar crack. To date, 210 RH-53 blades have been returned to Naval Air Rework Facility (NARF) for various inspections and repairs-- 43 of these were for BIM indications. All 210 RH-53D rotor blades inspected demonstrated spar integrity. Why this is true is unknown, but the fact remains that in 38,216 RH-53D flying hours (229,296 blade hours) logged through December 1979 not one crack has been found in an RH-53D rotor blade spar. Moreover, an H-53 blade fatigue failure analysis conducted by Sikorsky in 1974 revealed that rotor blades with cracked spars would retain structural integrity for up to 79 flight hours from crack initiation. The time from crack initiation to spar failure is a function of airspeed, as indicated below.

~~TOP SECRET~~

~~TOP SECRET~~

<u>FORWARD SPEED</u>	<u>TIME FROM CRACK INITIATION TO SPAR SEPARATION</u>	
100 KTS	79.27 HRS	<u>NOTE:</u> Based upon an aircraft maximum gross weight of 42,000 lb
120 KTS	27.47 HRS	
130 KTS	15.13 HRS	
140 KTS	8.73 HRS	
150 KTS	5.63 HRS	
160 KTS	3.33 HRS	
170 KTS	2.43 HRS	

In 1974, as a result of the Sikorsky data, the US Air Force directed that the H-53 not be flown in excess of five hours beyond BIM indication at or below 130 KTS nor more than two hours above 130 KTS.

(TS) Helicopter #5 aborted four hours into the mission and returned to NIMITZ because of failures to essential flight instruments that the pilots believed were critical to safely continuing the flight. At the abort point, #5 was within 25 minutes of exiting the dust cloud and about 55 minutes (110 nm) from Desert One. When the pilot was asked if he would have proceeded had he been fully aware that the dust cloud dissipated in 50 nm and the weather at Desert One was VMC, he said he probably would have.

(TS) The lead MC-130 crew possessed essential information on Desert One weather and the dust cloud that was not passed to Helicopter #5. Based on the helicopter pilot's testimony, these data, had they been passed, could have altered his abort decision. Once at Desert One, Helicopter #5 could have continued in the VMC conditions existing and, moreover, would have had the opportunity to exchange equipment with the non-mission-capable helicopter.

(TS) Helicopter #2 aborted at Desert One because of a hydraulic pump failure resulting from fluid depletion through a cracked "B" nut. Failures of this type usually result in metal contamination throughout the hydraulic system. Correcting the malfunction required replacing pump and filters and thorough flushing of the system. The extensive maintenance required to repair a hydraulic pump malfunction justified the decision to not take a spare hydraulic pump along.

~~TOP SECRET~~

(S) Alternative. In light of the circumstances surrounding helicopter aborts that led ultimately to the overall mission abort, it is apparent that the pilot of helicopter #5 lacked certain knowledge vital to reaching an informed decision to proceed or abort. Uncertainty regarding Iranian radar coverage and the dust phenomenon (see Issues 14 and 18) played important roles in Helicopter #5's decision to return to the carrier. However, the major factor in his abort decision was lack of readily available information on weather conditions further en route and at Desert One. Information on the number of mission-capable helicopters at Desert One or still en route also could have influenced his decision and should have been made known. Failure to pass this vital information back to [redacted] and rebroadcast it via secure HF was the result of a very restrictive communications doctrine related to the overriding concern for OPSEC. However, there were ways to pass the information to C-130s and helicopters en route that would have small likelihood of compromising the mission.

(b)(1)(a)(1)
(b)(1)(a)(5)

1-37
1-38
*Capabilities,
activities*

(S) A BIM indication was a likely occurrence on the mission and had been experienced in training. BIM indications and other likely malfunctions should have been identified and researched in detail and information provided aircrews as part of their mission preparation.

(S) Implications. The negative aspects of the proposed alternative are relatively insignificant. [redacted]

(b)(1)(a)
(b)(5)

1-37
1-39

[redacted] Therefore it is somewhat doubtful that secure HF retransmissions [redacted] would have compromised OPSEC. [redacted]

*Capabilities
Plans*

[redacted] in the positive vein, the proposed alternative would have provided for a covered and secure flow of vital information to the rescue force while en route to Desert One [redacted]

(S) Evaluation. When considering the conflict that often arises between OPSEC and operational requirements, a prudent planner of a clandestine high-risk venture should always be conservative. However, in the narrow scope of this issue, the group concludes that restricted communications flow within the task force denied information essential to reach informed decisions. The additional information might have prompted Helicopter #5 to continue on to Desert One. One more flyable helicopter would have enabled the mission to proceed.

ISSUE 18: (U) The enemy radar threat

(TS) Event. This issue, while stated in generalized fashion, derives from a single, highly explicit event

[REDACTED]

(b)(U)(a)(1)
(b)(1)(a)(4)

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

(TS) Implications. There exists the possibility that some helicopter pilot judgements regarding altitude selection were affected by the informal [REDACTED]

(TS) Evaluation. It would be inappropriate to fault COMJTF and his staff in this instance, as he learned of the informal [REDACTED] after the mission had been concluded, obviously much too late to take corrective action. Furthermore, six helicopters did arrive at Desert One, and the abort at that point cannot be related to any alleged enemy [REDACTED] capability along the penetration

1-40
1-41
plans,
weapons,
capabilities,
activity,
method

~~TOP SECRET~~

route. What is illustrated by this event deserves reemphasis, however. [REDACTED] (b)(1)(a)(1)

[REDACTED] all concerned should refer law information reports to the appropriate intelligence staff representative for confirmation, denial, or other qualification before accepting the report as factual.

1-40
Capabilities

~~TOP SECRET~~

ISSUE 19: (U) Helicopter communications

(TS) Event. The helicopter force was inculcated with the view that any communications from or between them would seriously threaten OPSEC. [REDACTED]

(b)(1)(a)(1)
(b)(1)(a)(2)

1-42
plans, capabilities, system capabilities, system vulnerabilities

[REDACTED] Accordingly, the helicopter force planned and trained to operate in complete radio silence. Intraflight communication, where possible, was to be done with light signals. The absence of radio communications indicated to the helicopter pilots that all was well and to continue the mission. [REDACTED]

[REDACTED] Subsequently, when helicopter flight became separated in the dust cloud, each separate element lacked this and other vital information. The lead helicopter did not know that #8 had successfully recovered the crew from #6 and continued nor that #6 had been abandoned in the desert. More importantly, after he reversed course in the dust and landed, the lead could not logically deduce either that the other helicopters had continued or that they had turned back to return to the carrier. He did not know when the flight had disintegrated. He could have assumed that they had become separated before he reversed course and unknowingly proceeded. Alternatively, they could have lost sight of him after turning and, mistaking his intentions, continued back to the carrier. Lastly, #5 might have elected to continue had he known that his arrival at Desert One would have allowed the mission to continue and that VMC existed at the rendezvous.

(TS) JTF Rationale. In concert with the view that OPSEC was critical to [REDACTED] with surprise, every effort was made to keep radio transmissions to the absolute minimum. [REDACTED]

(TS) Alternative. Capabilities existed to pass to the helicopter crews vital information that would have enabled them to make more informed judgments. [REDACTED]

(b)(1)(a)(5)
(b)(5)

[REDACTED] On the night of 24 April, all information deemed vital to the helicopters could have been transmitted by NIMITZ [REDACTED]

(b)(1)(a)(5)

1-43
1-44
activities
1-43
activities

[REDACTED]

(b)(1)(A),
(b)(1)(A),
(b)(1)(A),
(b)(5)

1-42
1-43
1-44
Plans,
capabilities,
systems
capabilities,
activities

(S) Implications. Negative implications of the proposed alternative are relatively minor. As outlined above, secure communications

(b)(1)(A) (2)
(b)(1)(A) (1)
(b)(1)(A) (5)
(b)(5)

would not likely have compromised OPSEC.

[REDACTED]

On the positive side, the proposed procedures would have enabled helicopter crews to be better informed while en route.

(S) Evaluation. A system providing secure intelligence to the helicopter crews would have significantly enhanced the probability of the mission proceeding beyond Desert One. By his own statement, if the helicopter commander aboard #5 had been aware that the weather at Desert One was VMC, he would have continued.

Plans
capabilities,
systems
capabilities,
activities

1-42
1-43
1-44

ISSUE 20: (U) Alternatives to the Desert One site

(16) Event. Early in the hostage rescue planning, it became clear that a desert rendezvous in Iran to refuel helicopters and onload the assault force had many advantages. Accordingly, the JTF initiated a search for a suitable C-130 landing site.

(b)(1)(a)

(b)(1)(a)

[REDACTED]

The site had to be located within a prescribed distance of Tehran

to have the necessary dimensions to land, park, and launch six C-130s and eight RH-53Ds; and to satisfy a geological estimate of satisfactory bearing surface.

[REDACTED]

(16) JTF Rationale.

[REDACTED]

1-45
1-46
Plans
Capabilities
Activity
Mentioned

(b)(1)(a)(1)

i-45
plans,
methods

[REDACTED] To succeed, the plan called for [REDACTED] of nautical darkness [REDACTED] and temperatures that would enable the helicopters to lift the fuel, equipment, and assault force believed necessary to successfully execute the plan. The window where all these environmental factors overlapped closed [REDACTED]

[REDACTED] On the basis of the [REDACTED] the JTF anticipated that the force at Desert One would be observed by passing vehicles. They had a plan [REDACTED]

(TS) Alternative. The Desert One plan was feasible, but the risks of compromise along the road were high. When it was learned that Helicopter #2 had aborted at the site for hydraulic failure, COMJTF asked his on-scene commanders to reaffirm that they could not proceed with five helicopters. They advised that five were not enough, and the force was ordered to withdraw. However, had Helicopter #5 arrived on the scene in lieu of returning to the carrier, it is assumed the rescue mission would have continued as planned.

(b)(1)(a)(4)
(b)(5)

1-46
1-47
Source

[REDACTED]

The vehicles and helicopter abandoned along the road would more than likely draw attention to the scene and ultimately to the C-130 wheel ruts. As a result, COMJTF was on the horns of a dilemma: the risk of compromise was increased if the mission proceeded and was certain if the force withdrew. Clearly, another site away from roads would have markedly reduced the risk of compromising the rescue mission in its early phases before the assault force [REDACTED]

activity,
method

[REDACTED]

(TS) Implications. The group's alternative depended on the photographic identification of other suitable site(s) clear of roads and inhabited areas. Intelligence planners for the JTF had concluded none existed, and the group has no basis for believing that the search for alternative sites was anything less than thorough. A perfunctory review of the available photography by the group did not confirm the availability of any alternate potential sites.

1-45
1-46
1-47

[REDACTED]

(b)(1)(a)(1)
(b)(1)(a)(1)
(b)(5)

Nevertheless, traffic on the road that bisected Desert One operations was almost certain, and there was the probability of abandoning a helicopter or other equipment.

(handwritten)
re: (b)(1)(a)(1)
re: (b)(5)

(TS) Evaluation. Hostage rescue in a hostile environment carries great risk for the hostages and their liberators. Accordingly, the planners should take every precaution to reduce risk. A refueling site in the desert was an integral part of the only feasible rescue plan, and the siting of Desert One apparently had no suitable alternative in a remote location. Therefore, the JTF's solution appears to be the only reasonable one, but the group concludes that it probably carried more risk than the JTF had assessed.

ISSUE 21: (U) Command and control at Desert One

(15) Event. The first aircraft to arrive at Desert One, carrying the on-scene commander, Combat Control Team, and Road Watch Team, executed a missed approach to avoid a vehicle traveling along the highway adjacent to the desert strip. As the aircraft landed on its third approach, the Road Watch Team disembarked to take up blocking positions on the roadway approaches to Desert One. They each encountered traffic, one a bus with a driver and 43 passengers, the other a small fuel truck followed closely by a pickup truck. All three vehicles showed no signs of stopping when signaled. Shots were fired, which resulted in the bus stopping and the fuel truck set on fire. The fuel truck driver jumped out, raced back to the pickup, and escaped--44 Iranians on the bus were detained. This had all taken place rather rapidly--the operation was becoming more complex, but these contingencies had been foreseen and planned for. As the site filled up with C-130s, more than had been exercised [REDACTED]

(b)(1)(a)(1)

[REDACTED] it took on new and larger dimensions than had been experienced but was unfolding as planned. Then it became apparent the helicopters were late, but for reasons unknown at Desert One. As the helicopters started arriving in separate elements, concern increased that there would not be enough helicopters, fuel, or time remaining to continue beyond Desert One. The setting in which all this took place was, at best, a difficult but manageable one. The noise generated by 16 C-130 and 12 RH-53D engines made voice or radio communications difficult. Personnel moving about Desert One were shadowy, somewhat fuzzy figures, barely recognizable [REDACTED]. Then came the unfortunate accident, when Helicopter #4 crashed into a C-130 while repositioning to allow another helicopter to take on more fuel for the return flight to NIMITZ.

(16) As complex and difficult as the Desert One scenario was, it had not been fully rehearsed. A training exercise [REDACTED] conducted on 13-14 April with two C-130s [REDACTED] and four H-53s was used to validate the Desert One concept. Perhaps because the scope and complexity of Desert One was not replicated in a full-dress rehearsal, the plan for this desert rendezvous was soft. There was no identifiable command post for the on-scene commander; a staff and runners were not anticipated; backup rescue [REDACTED] radios were not available until the third C-130 arrived; and, lastly, key personnel and those with critical functions were not identified for ease of recognition.

1-48
Plans,
Dialectics

~~TOP SECRET~~

For example, when the Desert One on-scene commander's name surfaced during post-mission interviews with helicopter pilots, they stated that, in some cases, that they did not know or recognize the authority of those giving orders at Desert One. In this regard, instructions to evacuate helicopters and board the C-130s had to be questioned to determine the identity of those giving the orders to establish their proper authority.

(S) JTF Rationale. The overriding concern for OPSEC played heavily in the JTF's decision not to fully rehearse the Desert One scenario. Moreover, the JTF apparently believed that desert operations had been practiced sufficiently and that, although there were technical differences in the refueling, a full rehearsal was not justified. With regard to identification, members of the JTF, by their own testimony, were confident that personal recognition between the key players was adequate to facilitate command and control at Desert One.

(S) Alternative. The review group concluded that the uncertainties of conducting a clandestine operation in a hostile environment argued for the strictest adherence to doctrinal command and control procedures. The on-scene and functional commanders, their alternates, and personnel of every key function should have been designated with readily identifiable markings visible in artificial or natural light. This would have enabled everyone on the scene to easily identify and quickly seek out responsible authorities for guidance when contingencies arose and to immediately recognize the authority of those giving orders or direction. (b)(1)(a)(1)

1-48
activities

(S) The lack of effective command and control became evident when the helicopter flight leader did not arrive first as scheduled at Desert One. There was no way to quickly find out or locate who was in charge. When the on-scene commander happened to be away from his radio to consult with others, his radio operator broadcast that the RH-53 and the C-130 had collided. Unfortunately, the transmission was incomplete and no call sign was given. This resulted in several blind radio calls in an attempt to find out what had happened and where. These unnecessary transmissions blocked out other radio calls. (b)(1)(a)(1)
(b)(1)(a)(1)

Plans
activities
1-48
1-49

~~TOP SECRET~~

(TS) The on-scene commander's principal location should have been fixed and easily recognized. An alternate or second in command and runners to carry orders should have been available and identifiable. Armbands or some other easily recognizable device would have had to have been fabricated for the identification of key personnel and their agents. In addition, backup communications should have been carried on both the first and second C-130s to insure reliable and secure communications from Desert One as soon as possible. Lastly, although not central to the command and control issue, a full-dress training exercise at a comparable desert training site could well have surfaced some of these problems (see Issue 5).

(TS) Implications. The review group's alternative would have reduced confusion and accelerated information flow at Desert One. Equally important, it would have virtually eliminated the disconnects that surfaced when principals such as the helicopter flight commander arrived last and the Deputy Commander for Helicopter Forces aborted.

(TS) Evaluation. Although the proposed alternative would have smoothed Desert One operations, it would not have influenced the outcome. Nevertheless, it is a significant lesson learned for application to future operations.

ISSUE 22: (U) Classified material safeguard

1-50
Plans,
capabilities

(b)(1)(a)(1)

~~(TS)~~ Event. In the event of mission abort at Desert One, JTF guidance called for pilots, crews, and operators to return their helicopters and equipment to NIMITZ, taking appropriate action to protect classified material. The plan proved infeasible when one helicopter crashed into a C-130, resulting in fire, casualties, and an overall hazardous situation. The on-scene commander decided to withdraw the entire force by the remaining C-130 aircraft as soon as possible, leaving the five undamaged helicopters at Desert One. Two of the helicopters were located in the southern refuel zone were properly sanitized of classified material by the individuals responsible. The other three helicopters were located in the northern refuel zone in close proximity (within 100-150 feet) to the crash and fire. Personnel responsible for the classified material and radio equipment in those helicopters attempted to return to them to remove documents, but were told to immediately board or, in some cases, reboard the C-130s to expedite withdrawal. Failure to sanitize the helicopters resulted in loss and compromise of classified material. There is no evidence or any indication that the on-scene commander was aware that classified material was being left behind.

~~(TS)~~ JTF Rationale. JTF guidance, coupled with military SOP and training, appeared sufficient to provide for adequate protection of classified material. The decision by the Desert One on-scene commander to expedite withdrawal of personnel by the remaining C-130 aircraft was made in the interest of troop safety, to protect remaining assets, and to minimize risk of detection.

~~(TS)~~ Alternative. The review group's alternative would have been to refine command and control procedures at Desert One to assure adherence to provisions of the JTF plan for handling of classified material (see Issue 21).

~~(TS)~~ Implications. An attempt to return to the helicopters and to sanitize them could have cost additional lives and increased the risk of discovery and of damage to the escape aircraft. However, the helicopters were not destroyed, there remained a requirement to protect classified material, and a period in excess of 20 minutes was available to sanitize the helicopters.

(S) Evaluation. The loss of classified [redacted] [redacted] (b)(1)(a)(1)
[redacted] had no direct impact on the success of this
mission. However, such loss reflects unfavorably on the
performance of the personnel involved. Their actions resulted
in possible enemy exploitation of sensitive [redacted]
[redacted] including its use for propaganda ends. [redacted]

1-50

evaluation

ISSUE 23. (U) Destruct devices on rescue mission helicopters

~~(TS)~~ Event. Helicopter #6 developed mechanical problems en route to Desert One and landed in the desert short of destination. [REDACTED]

1-51
capabilities
helicopter destruction were not available. An unforeseen accident and ensuing conflagration at Desert One prevented the on-scene commander from implementing the helicopter destruction plan because he perceived it to be too risky. As a result, five RH-53Ds were abandoned intact. [REDACTED]

(b)(1)(a)(1)

~~(TS)~~ JTF Rationale. In planning the rescue mission, it was envisioned that helicopters abandoned in Iran would be sanitized and left intact. Planners believed that destroying the helicopters presented a greater risk of mission compromise if executed prior to withdrawal and an unnecessary complication and delay during evacuation at the extraction site. As planning proceeded, an option to destroy the helicopters in Iran should a contingency situation warrant, was considered. This contingency called for [REDACTED] to place thermite grenades in the helicopters in their destruction was called for and then to detonate them. This option was never implemented at Desert One because of the perceived danger of exploding helicopters and ammunition to personnel and aircraft evacuating the site and to Iranians aboard a nearby bus.

~~(TS)~~ Alternative. The review group believes it prudent to have detailed plans for contingency destruction of equipment in missions similar to the Iranian rescue. Providing the option for contingency destruction is most important when the equipment is to be abandoned in a hostile country. There is good reason to believe such explosives, when properly installed, are no more dangerous to crew and passengers than the onboard fuel supply. Moreover, explosives for use in destroying the helicopters and breaching the Embassy had to be carried aboard several, if not all, helicopters to insure availability. Therefore, it is a moot point as to what explosives were carried onboard and where they were placed. On at least one previous rescue mission (Son Tay), explosives for helicopter self-destruction were placed onboard at the outset. The helicopter to be abandoned was fitted with explosives and detonators. Electrical initiators were placed apart from the explosives, and the electrical leads left disconnected. Aircrew members destroyed the helicopter, when necessary, by simply connecting the initiator to the explosives and activating a built-in timing device. With regard to aircrew reluctance to have

similar devices to the ones used in the Son Tay raid aboard their helicopters, Iranian-mission aircrews interviewed stated that this procedure was acceptable to them. Moreover, they admitted that most explosives were less of a danger than other hazardous material carried on-board mission helicopters; e.g., fuel [REDACTED]

(b)(1)(a)(1)

1-51
Plans,
abilities

(TS) Equipping rescue mission helicopters with easily removable, separated, and disconnected explosive devices and initiators should not have jeopardized safety and would have enhanced the ability to destroy helicopters at any point in the mission. [REDACTED]

(TS) Implications. Negative implications of the group's proposal are nil. Aircrews would have had to have been trained to connect and operate the destruct devices planned for use in their helicopters. There was ample time available at [REDACTED] to accomplish this training. Flight safety would not have been compromised. On the positive side, the proposed alternative could have eliminated the requirement to have [REDACTED] explosives, reduced response time, and provided the option to destroy helicopters at any point in the mission. Thus the group's alternative would have enabled Helicopter #6's crew to destroy their aircraft in the desert if called for and could have provided greater opportunity to destroy all helicopters abandoned at Desert One.

(TS) Evaluation. Equipping helicopters with destruct devices would not have altered the circumstances that ultimately led to aborting the rescue mission. However, the lack of destruct capability severely limited the Desert One on-scene commander's ability to execute destruction when an unforeseen contingency developed. [REDACTED]

(U) Summary of Major Issues

(U) Of the 23 issues analyzed, 11 were considered to be major issues, ones that had a identifiable influence on the outcome of the hostage rescue effort or that should receive the most careful consideration at all levels in planning for any future special operation. While the other 12 issues are not accorded the same priority, they do reflect valuable lessons learned. To provide a reference for the subsequent conclusions, the 11 major issues are listed below:

(U) OPSEC.

(U) Independent review of plans.

Plans
1-52
✓(U) Organization, command and control, and the applicability of [REDACTED]

(b)(1)(a)(i)

(U) Comprehensive readiness evaluation.

(U) Size of the helicopter force.

(U) Overall coordination of joint training.

(U) Command and control at Desert One.

(U) Centralized and integrated intelligence support external to the JTF.

(U) Alternatives to the Desert One site.

(U) Handling the dust phenomenon.

(U) C-130 pathfinders.

IV. CONCLUSIONS

(U) The conclusions drawn in this chapter derive from the determination of fact presented in Chapter II and the analysis of issues discussed in Chapter III.

SPECIFIC CONCLUSIONS

(U) The concept of a small clandestine operation was valid and consistent with national policy objectives.

(U) The review group concludes that the concept of a small, clandestine operation was sound. A larger, overt attempt would probably have resulted in the deaths of the hostages before they could be reached. It offered the best chance of getting the hostages out alive and the least danger of starting a war with Iran. Further, the large-scale military thrust required by an overt operation would have triggered early hostile reaction, possibly resulting in widespread Iranian casualties and giving strong credence to probable Iranian allegations that the rescue attempt was an act of war. Conversely, a small operation with Iranian casualties essentially limited to the act of freeing the hostages would have better supported the contention that it was a rescue, not a punitive raid.

(U) The operation was feasible and probably represented the plan with the best chance of success at the time the mission was launched.

(U) Despite all the complexities, the inherent difficulties, and the human and equipment performance required, the review group unanimously concludes that the risks were manageable, the overall probability of success good, and the operation feasible. Under these conditions, decision to execute was justified.

~~(S)~~ The plan for the unexecuted portion of the mission was soundly conceived and capable of successful execution. It appeared to be better than other alternatives--a realistic option with the best chance for success at the time of mission execution. Based upon [redacted] and a comparison with the capabilities of CT forces of other nations, it appears that selection, training, and equipment of

(b)(1)
(a)(1)

1-53
capabilities

the ground rescue forces were excellent.

(U) The group believes it virtually impossible to precisely appraise the remaining part of the operation and to measure probability of success. During that portion of the mission, the inevitability of hostile reaction would have become a major factor. The dynamics inherent in a recovery of the type envisioned would have produced a level of complexity that makes the study of probabilities essentially a matter of conjecture.

(U) The rescue mission was a high-risk operation.

(U) The mission had to be considered high risk because people and equipment were being called upon to perform at the upper limits of human capacity and equipment capability. There was little margin to compensate for mistakes or plain bad luck.

(U) Furthermore, possible measures to reduce the high risk factor could conceivably introduce new elements of risk. For example, the JTF considered that adding more helicopters and crews to improve the chances of having more helicopters available en route would result in an unnecessary increase in the OPSEC risk. A delay in execution for additional training

(b)(1)(a)(1)
(b)(1)(a)(2)
(b)(1)(a)(4)
(b)(1)(a)(5)

[REDACTED] could increase the risk [REDACTED]

1-53
1-54
1-55

(U) The first realistic capability to successfully accomplish the rescue of the hostages was reached at the end of March.

(U) Confidence in the probability of mission success grew after the final training exercise in the western United States. With the possible exception of several items of communications equipment, essentially all mechanical means used in the rescue operation--helicopters, aircraft, and special equipment--were available on 4 November 1979.

[REDACTED]

(b)(1)(a)(2)

plans,
vulnerabilities,
activity,
activities.

1-53

unit capabilities,
unit vulnerabilities

1-53

[REDACTED]

(b)(1)(a)(1)
(b)(1)(a)(2)
(b)(1)(a)(4)

1-54

[REDACTED]

*Plans,
Plans
vulnerabilities
Sixty*

(U) OPSEC was an overriding requirement for a successful operation.

(U) Rescue depended upon surprising the captors in the Embassy compound before the hostages could be harmed. If this surprise could not be achieved, the mission would fail--either canceled or aborted, with high probability of the hostages being removed or executed. Further, recognizing the importance of the element of surprise, the group is reluctant to criticize, even constructively, the OPSEC standards for being too strict, as secrecy was successfully preserved until after the withdrawal of the aircraft from Iran.

(U) Nevertheless, throughout the planning and execution phases, decisions were made and actions taken or not taken because of OPSEC that the group believed could have been done differently. Furthermore, most, if not all, of the suggested alternatives could have been implemented without an adverse OPSEC impact had there been a more precise OPSEC plan developed early after the formation of the JTF organization and with specific responsibilities assigned.

(U) Command and control was excellent at the upper echelons, but became more tenuous and fragile at the intermediate levels.

(U) The command and control arrangements at the higher echelons from the NCA through the Joint Chiefs of Staff to COMJTF were ideal. Further down the operational chain, command relationships were less well defined and not as well understood.

(U) Several examples of shortcomings in the organization are evident during both preparatory and execution phases. No one person, except for COMJTF, had overall responsibility for the helicopters and pilots during their very on--difficult training period. Some Service component commanders were only vaguely identified. Finally, while operational commanders were designated, there appear to have been inadequate provisions to make them clearly identifiable under the foreseeable conditions of darkness, noise, and dust at Desert One. The on-scene commander had no designated staff to assist in maintaining command and control, nor was a command post planned and clearly defined to other members of the force.

(U) External resources adequately supported the JTF and were not a limiting factor.

(U) The effectiveness of the special supply system for the helicopters was commendable, especially considering the problems imposed by OPSEC.

(U) Planning was adequate except for the number of backup helicopters and the provisions for weather contingencies.

848 More helicopters aboard NIMITZ would have increased the chances of the required number of "Up" helicopters being available at each stage [redacted] RH-53Ds with crews could have been deployed to NIMITZ without crowding or impacting other mission requirements of the carrier and without a reduction in OPSEC. The use of C-130 aircraft to lead the RH-53D flight to Desert One would have decreased the probability of a mission abort due to the weather. C-130 pathfinders [redacted] RH-53Ds could have been added to the mission without requiring additional fuel at Desert One.

(b)(1)(a)(z)



1-53

plan in capabilities

(U) Preparation for the mission was adequate except for the lack of comprehensive, full-scale training.

(U) OPSEC considerations militated against such a rehearsal and, while the review group recognized the inherent risk in bringing all of the forces together in the western US training site, the possible security disadvantages of such a rehearsal seem to be outweighed by the advantages to be gained:

(U) Increasing familiarity of element leaders with one another, both during the operation and in the ensuing debriefing critique.

(U) Exposing the command and control relationships to the pressures of a full-scale combination of airplanes, helicopters, troops, and vehicles, maneuvering in the crowded parking area under the confusing conditions of noise, dust, and darkness.

(U) Two factors combined to directly cause the mission abort: Unexpected helicopter failure rate, and low visibility flight conditions en route to Desert One.

(U) If the dust phenomenon had not occurred, Helicopter #5 would have arrived at Desert One, or if one more helicopter had remained up, six would have arrived at Desert One despite the dust.

(U) There were alternatives available that would have reduced the probability of an abort due to these factors, and they have been discussed in detail in terms of planning and preparation.

UNCLASSIFIED

Following promotion to Vice Admiral and duty as Deputy Commander in Chief Atlantic and U.S. Atlantic Fleet, he returned to command at sea in May 1972 as Commander, U.S. Seventh Fleet. For directing Seventh Fleet operations in the Vietnam War, and particularly the highly successful Navy air operations, from May 1972 to August 1973, and the strategically important mine warfare operations in North Vietnam, Vice Admiral Holloway was awarded his third Distinguished Service Medal.

On 1 September 1973, he was promoted to Admiral and became Vice Chief of Naval Operations, the post he held until assuming the Navy's top uniformed position on 1 July 1974.

Admiral Holloway was born in Charleston, South Carolina, on February 23, 1922, the son of Admiral James L. Holloway, Jr., U.S. Navy (Retired) and the late Jean Hagood Holloway. He is married to the former Dabney Rawlings, the daughter of Rear Admiral Norborne L. Rawlings (Retired) and Mrs. Rawlings of Washington, D.C. The Holloways have two daughters, Lucy Holloway Lyon and Jane Meredith Holloway.

UNCLASSIFIED

TAB B

LIEUTENANT GENERAL SAMUEL V. WILSON
UNITED STATES ARMY (RET)

Lieutenant General Samuel V. Wilson served as the Director, Defense Intelligence Agency from May 1976 until his retirement from the Army on 1 September 1977.



General Wilson has had extensive experience in unconventional warfare and special operations planning and execution, and has a broad background in both the intelligence field and in international affairs. He enlisted in the Army in June 1940 and served as a platoon sergeant with the 116th Infantry, 29th Division. Following OCS graduation, he was commissioned a 2nd Lieutenant in the United States Army on 17 August 1942, and assigned to the Infantry School as an instructor in small unit and guerrilla tactics. Subsequently he joined the para-military ranks of the OSS and then participated in extensive behind-the-lines combat in the China-Burma-India Theater as an intelligence and reconnaissance officer and later rifle company commander in the 5307th Composite Unit (Provisional) ("Merrill's Marauders").

Following World War II, Captain Wilson taught military leadership at the Infantry School for two years, and from there entered the Army's four-year Foreign Area Specialist Training Program (Russian), graduating in the summer of 1951. He has lived, studied, and traveled extensively throughout the Soviet Union and Eastern Europe.

Throughout the period from 1951 to 1958, Major Wilson served in a variety of special operations and intelligence assignments, including a three-year operational tour with the Central Intelligence Agency. In 1959, Lieutenant Colonel Wilson became Director of Instruction of the Army's Special Warfare School at Fort Bragg, North Carolina. He commanded a unit of 7th Special

~~UNCLASSIFIED~~

Forces Group (Airborne) at Fort Bragg in 1961 before being called later in that year to appointment as Deputy Assistant to the Secretary of Defense for Special Operations, a capacity in which he served until 1963. Extensive staff and command duties in the counterinsurgency area followed, and he served as Army component commander in a number of joint airborne exercises.

He was accorded the personal rank of Minister in the US Foreign Service in 1966 while serving as the U.S. Mission Coordinator in Vietnam. He commanded the 6th Special Forces Group (Airborne) from 1967 to 1968, and was Special Assistant to the Commanding General, U.S. Army JFK Center for Special Warfare at Fort Bragg, North Carolina, between 1968 and 1969. He served subsequently as Director, Military Assistance School, and as the Assistant Commandant of the Army Institute for Military Assistance at Fort Bragg. In 1970, General Wilson became Assistant Division Commander, 82nd Airborne Division, where he served until February 1971. He was then assigned as the US Defense Attache/US Army Attache, Moscow, USSR, where he served until March 1973. Thereafter followed duty with the Defense Intelligence Agency, first as Deputy Director for Estimates and then as Deputy Director for Attache Affairs. In September 1974, he was appointed to the post of Deputy Director, Central Intelligence for the Intelligence Community, Washington, D.C., where he served until his assignment in May 1976 as Director of the Defense Intelligence Agency.

General Wilson's military decorations and awards include the Distinguished Service Cross, Defense Distinguished Service Medal, Army Distinguished Service Medal with two Oak Leaf Clusters, National Intelligence Distinguished Service Medal, CIA Distinguished Intelligence Medal, Silver Star with Oak Leaf Cluster, Legion of Merit with Oak Leaf Cluster, Bronze Star Medal for Valor with Oak Leaf Cluster, Meritorious Service Medal, Joint Services Commendation Medal, Army Commendation Medal with Oak Leaf Cluster, Combat Infantryman Badge, and Master Parachutist Badge.

He is a graduate of the Army's Infantry School (Advanced Course), the Army's Command and General Staff College, and the Air War College and was awarded an honorary Doctor of Laws degree in 1979 from Hampden-Sydney College in Virginia.

General Wilson was born in Prince Edward County, Virginia, on September 23, 1923. He is married to the former Frances Brenda Downing of Lee County, Alabama. The Wilson's have four children: Samuel V., Jr. (a US Army Major), Susan V., Jackson B., and David J. M.

He was promoted to the grade of Lieutenant General on 4 October 1974.

UNCLASSIFIED

TAB C

LIEUTENANT GENERAL LEROY J. MANOR
UNITED STATES AIR FORCE (RET)

Lieutenant General LeRoy J. Manor served as the Chief of Staff, US Pacific Command, from 12 October 1976 until his retirement from the Air Force on 1 July 1978. Following retirement, he represented the Joint Chiefs of Staff and CINCPAC as senior military negotiator and advisor to the US Ambassador to the Philippines for the Military Bases Agreement (MBA). Amendments to the MBA were agreed upon and signed subsequently by both Governments.



Born in Morrisonville, N.Y., on February 21, 1921, General Manor graduated in 1937 from Cadyville High School, Cadyville, N.Y., and then received his Teacher's Certificate from New York State Normal School in 1940. General Manor entered aviation cadet training in November 1942 and received his pilot wings and commission upon graduation in August 1943.

During World War II, he flew 72 combat missions as a P-47 pilot with the 358th Fighter Group in Europe, and was later assigned to the 100th Fighter Wing, also in Europe.

In September 1945, General Manor was assigned as a pilot at the Air Proving Grounds, Fla. He attended New York University during 1946-47 and received a bachelor of science degree in education. For the next six years, General Manor was an instructor, first at Tactical Air School, Tyndall Air Force Base; next at the newly formed Squadron Officer School, Maxwell Air Force Base; and last at the Air-Ground Operations School, Southern Pines, N.C.

From September 1953 to June 1955, General Manor was a staff officer with the 6th Allied Tactical Air Force (NATO) at Izmir, Turkey. He returned in July 1955 to assume command of the 2242d Air Reserve Flying Center at Selfridge Air Force Base, Mich.

General Manor entered the Armed Forces Staff College in July 1958. Upon graduation he was assigned to the 27th Tactical Fighter Wing, Cannon Air Force Base, New Mexico, and commanded the 481st Tactical Fighter Squadron.

In July 1960, General Manor transferred to Headquarters, United States Air Forces in Europe, where he was Chief, Tactical Evaluation Division, until July 1963, when he entered the Industrial College of the Armed Forces.

In June 1964, General Manor was assigned to Headquarters US Air Force in the Office of the Deputy Chief of Staff, Plans and Operations, where he served successively in the Directorate of Operations as Chief, Plans and Capabilities Branch; Chief, Analysis of Southeast Asia Operations Study Group; and as Chief, Operations Review Group.

In May 1968, he assumed command of the 37th Tactical Fighter Wing in the Republic of Vietnam where he completed 275 combat missions in North and South Vietnam. In June 1969, he was named Commander of the 835th Air Division at McDonnell Air Force Base, Kansas.

General Manor became Commander of the US Air Force Special Operations Force in February 1970. From August 8, 1970, to November 21, 1970, he additionally served as Commander of a joint task force whose mission was to search for and rescue United States military personnel held as prisoners of war at Son Tay, North Vietnam.

In February 1971, General Manor became Deputy Director for Operations/Special Assistant for Counterinsurgency and Special Activities, Joint Staff at Washington, D.C. He was transferred to the Philippines in February 1973 to become Vice Commander, 13th Air Force, Pacific Air Forces, at Clark Air Base. He was 13th Air Force Commander from October 1973 until October 1976, when assigned duty as Chief of Staff, Pacific Command.

General Manor is a command pilot with more than 6,500 flying hours. His military decorations and awards include the Distinguished Service Medal with 3 Oak Leaf Clusters; Legion of Merit with one Oak Leaf Cluster; Distinguished Flying Cross with one Oak Leaf Cluster; Air Medal with 25 Oak Leaf Clusters; Air Force Commendation Medal with one Oak Leaf Cluster; Purple Heart; Air Force Outstanding Unit Award Ribbon; Republic of Vietnam Distinguished Service Order, 2d Class; Republic of Vietnam Armed Forces Honor Medal; Republic of Korea Order of Military Merit; Republic of Vietnam Gallantry Cross with palm; Republic of Philippines Legion of Honor; and Republic of Vietnam Campaign Medal.

UNCLASSIFIED

General Manor and his wife, the former Dolores H. Brookes of Schenectady, N.Y., have three children, Alan, Mary, and Dean.

He was promoted to the grade of lieutenant general on November 1, 1976, with same date of rank.

UNCLASSIFIED

TAB D

MAJOR GENERAL JAMES C. SMITH
UNITED STATES ARMY

Major General James C. Smith is the Director of Training, Office of the Deputy Chief of Staff for Operations and Plans, US Army.

General Smith was born in the 6th US Cavalry Regiment, Fort Oglethorpe, Catoosa County, Georgia, on 5 September 1923 and graduated from Chattanooga City High School, Chattanooga, Tennessee, in 1941. He attended North Georgia College, Dahlonega, Georgia, for six months and then withdrew to enlist in the Army on 30 June 1942.



General Smith has had broad combat experience encompassing infantry, armor, air cavalry, and airmobile units. He enlisted in the Army on 30 June 1942 and rose to the rank of sergeant before attending Officer Candidate School at the Cavalry School, Fort Riley, Kansas. Commissioned a 2nd lieutenant on 14 January 1943, he saw combat with Third Army in Europe as a platoon leader in the 28th Cavalry Reconnaissance Squadron. As a result of serious wounds, he was evacuated to England in 1945. He qualified as a liaison pilot in November 1946, and then returned to Europe as an Air Observation Pilot in his former combat unit. He completed helicopter flight training in 1952, and was subsequently assigned to the Light Aviation Section, X Corps, in Korea. He has been at the forefront in the development of Army air mobility and served several tours in Vietnam with air cavalry and airmobile units.

General Smith's command experience is equally impressive. Beginning in October 1945, he commanded an assault gun/tank unit at the Cavalry School, Fort Riley, Kansas; in 1949, command of Company I, 3rd Battalion, 14th Armored Cavalry; in 1950, command of Company D, 1st Medium Tank Battalion, Fort Hood, Texas; in 1955, command of the 3rd Combat Aviation Company, Fort Benning, Georgia; in 1962, command of the 2nd Reconnaissance Squadron, 11th Armored Cavalry; in 1966, command of the Support Command, 1st Air Cavalry Division (Airmobile), command of the 1st Squadron, 9th Cavalry, 1st Air Cavalry Division (Airmobile), and command of the 1st Brigade, 1st Cavalry Division (Airmobile); in 1970, Commanding

UNCLASSIFIED

General, US Army Flight Training Center, Fort Stewart, Georgia; in 1971, Commanding General, 1st Cavalry Division (TRICAP); in 1973, Commanding General, US Army Readiness Region V, Fort Sheridan, Illinois; and in 1976, Commander, US Army Aviation Center and Fort Rucker, Alabama.

General Smith has attended the U.S. Army Command and General Staff College, the U.S. Army War College, and the University of Omaha where he earned the Bachelor of General Education Degree in 1961.

General Smith is a Master Army Aviator whose military decorations and awards include the Distinguished Service Medal, Silver Star with Oak Leaf Cluster, Legion of Merit with Oak Leaf Cluster, Distinguished Flying Cross with three Oak Leaf Clusters, Bronze Star with Oak Leaf Cluster, Air Medal with 63 Oak Leaf Clusters, Army Commendation Medal with "V" Device, Purple Heart with two Oak Leaf Clusters, Vietnamese Cross of Gallantry with Palm, Vietnamese Cross of Gallantry with Silver Star, Presidential Unit Citation (Korea), Presidential Unit Citation (Vietnam), four Overseas Bars, National Defense Service Medal with Oak Leaf Cluster, European, African, Middle Eastern Campaign Medal, World War II Victory Medal, Army of Occupation (Germany) Medal, Korean Service Medal with two Stars, United Nations Service Medal, American Campaign Medal, Vietnamese Service Medal, Vietnamese Campaign Medal, Combat Infantryman Badge, Master Army Aviator Badge and Parachutist Badge.

General Smith is married to the former Doris June Lewis of Homestead, Florida, and has seven children.

Major General Smith was promoted to his present grade on 10 March 1971, and assumed his current military assignment in December 1978.

UNCLASSIFIED

TAB E

MAJOR GENERAL JOHN L. PIOTROWSKI
UNITED STATES AIR FORCE

Major General John L. Piotrowski is deputy commander for air defense, Tactical Air Command, Peterson Air Force Base, Colo.

General Piotrowski was born February 17, 1934, in Detroit and graduated from Henry Ford Trade School, Dearborn, Mich., in 1951. He attended Arizona State University and Florida State University and graduated from the University of Nebraska at Omaha in 1965 with a bachelor of science degree. He did postgraduate work at the University of Southern California and Auburn University and attended the program for management development at Harvard University. He completed Air Command and Staff College, Maxwell Air Force Base, Ala., in 1965; Armed Forces Staff College at Norfolk, Va., in August 1968; and Royal Air Force College of Air Warfare at Royal Air Force Station Manby, England, in July 1971.



General Piotrowski enlisted in the US Air Force in September 1952. After basic training at Lackland Air Force Base, Texas, he was assigned to Keesler Air Force Base, Miss., as a student in basic electronics and ground radar.

In July 1953, General Piotrowski transferred to Harlingen Air Force Base, Texas, for navigator training in the aviation cadet program. After graduating with honors, he was commissioned a 2nd lieutenant in August 1954 and returned to Keesler Air Force Base for advanced training in electronic countermeasures. In January 1955, he received the electronic warfare rating and was assigned to the 67th Tactical Reconnaissance Wing in Korea and Japan as an electronic warfare officer and RB-26 navigator.

UNCLASSIFIED

He returned in May 1957 for pilot training at Marana Air Base, Ariz.; Bainbridge Air Base, Ga.; and Bryan Air Force Base, Texas. He then attended F-86F aircraft advanced gunnery training at Williams Air Force Base, Ariz. Following graduation, he was assigned as armament and electronics maintenance officer at Williams and later at Luke Air Force Base, Ariz. In May 1961, he moved to Eglin Air Force Auxiliary Field 9, Fla., and joined the initial cadre of Project "Jungle Jim," which became the 1st Air Commando Wing. He was assigned in Southeast Asia from 1961 to 1963 as a munitions maintenance officer and T-28/B-26 combat aircrew member.

In August 1965, General Piotrowski transferred to the US Air Force Fighter Weapons School at Nellis Air Force Base, Nev., and served as an F-4 instructor pilot, chief of academics, and project officer for the US Air Force operational test and evaluation of the WALLEYE missile program.

Following graduation from the Armed Forces Staff College in August 1968, he was assigned to Headquarters, US Air Force, Washington, D.C., as an action officer under the deputy director of plans for force development.

From December 1970 to July 1971, he attended the Royal Air Force College of Air Warfare. He was then assigned to Bitburg Air Base, Germany, as Deputy Commander for Operations, 36th Tactical Fighter Wing. In January 1972, he assumed command of the 40th Tactical Group, Aviano Air Base, Italy.

In April 1974, General Piotrowski became chief of the US Air Force Six-Man Group, directly responsible to the Chief of Staff. He became Vice Commander of the Keesler Technical Training Center, Keesler Air Force Base, in March 1975.

In July 1976 General Piotrowski, assumed command of the 552nd Airborne Warning and Control Wing, Tinker Air Force Base, where he introduced the E-3A Sentry Airborne Warning and Control System aircraft as an operational Air Force weapon system. He assumed his present duties in September 1979.

General Piotrowski is a command pilot with more than 100 combat missions and 210 combat flying hours. His military decorations and awards include the Distinguished Service Medal, Legion of Merit, Meritorious Service Medal with two Oak Leaf Clusters, Air Medal with two Oak Leaf Clusters, Air Force Commendation Medal with one Oak Leaf Cluster, Presidential Unit Citation emblem and the Air Force Outstanding Unit Award ribbon with three Oak Leaf Clusters. He received the Eugene M. Zuckert Management Award for 1979 in December 1979.

ENCLOSURE

He was promoted to major general November 1, 1978, with date of rank July 1, 1975.

General Piotrowski is married to the former Sheila Dee Fredrickson of Racine, Wis. They have one daughter, Denise Lynn, and two sons, Scott Lee and Jon Dee.

TAB F

MAJOR GENERAL ALFRED M. GRAY, JR.
UNITED STATES MARINE CORPS

Major General Alfred M. Gray is the Deputy for Development/Director, Development Center, Marine Corps Development and Education Command, Quantico, Va. His responsibilities include the development of new doctrine, tactics, techniques, and equipment for landing forces in amphibious operations.

General Gray was born June 22, 1928, and hails from Point Pleasant Beach, N.J. He enlisted in the Marine Corps in 1950 and served overseas with the Amphibious Reconnaissance Platoon, Fleet Marine Force, Pacific, attaining the rank of sergeant. He was commissioned a 2nd lieutenant on April 9, 1952.

After joining the 1st Marine Division in Korea, he served a tour as an artillery officer with the 2d Battalion, 11th Marines, and a subsequent tour as an infantry officer with the 1st Battalion, Seventh Marines.

Returning to the United States in December 1954, General Gray was assigned to the Eighth Marines, 2d Marine Division, at Camp Lejeune, N.C., until August 1955, when he attended the Communications Officer School at Quantico. He was promoted to captain in July 1955. From April 1956 until May 1961, General Gray served overseas in special operations command billets in the Pacific and the Far East.

In May 1961, General Gray was assigned to Headquarters, Marine Corps, Washington, D.C., for duty as special operations and plans officer, G-2 Division. During this tour, he saw service in Guantanamo Bay, Cuba, and in Vietnam where he commanded a composite force which became the first Marine ground unit to conduct independent operations in Vietnam. He was promoted to major in February 1963.



CONFIDENTIAL

General Gray joined the 12th Marines, 3d Marine Division, in Vietnam in October 1965, serving concurrently as Regimental Communications Officer, Regimental S-3 Officer, and Artillery Aerial Observer. In April 1967, he was assigned command of the Composite Artillery Battalion and the US Free World Forces at Gio Linh. In September 1967, he was reassigned to the III Marine Amphibious Force in DaNang, where he commanded Marine SIGINT/EW elements throughout I Corps. He was promoted to lieutenant colonel in October 1967.

In February 1968, he returned to Washington, D.C., for duty with the Defense Special Projects Group as Chief, Intelligence and Operations Division. During the period June through September 1969, General Gray returned to Vietnam in conjunction with surveillance and reconnaissance matters in the I Corps Area.

Returning to Quantico in October 1969, he was assigned duty as Chief, Intelligence and Reconnaissance Division, at the Development Center, until August 1970. He attended the Command and Staff College and then joined the 2nd Marine Division at Camp Lejeune in June 1971, where he assumed command of the 1st Battalion, Second Marines, and Battalion Landing Team (BLT) 1/2. The BLT was deployed to the Mediterranean in September 1971, as part of the 34th Marine Amphibious Unit, and returned to the US in March 1972. General Gray commanded the Second Marines from April through December 1972, when he was reassigned as Assistant Chief of Staff, G-3, 2nd Marine Division. He was promoted to colonel in August 1972.

General Gray attended the Army War College, Carlisle Barracks, Pennsylvania, from August 1973 to June 1974, and upon graduation, was assigned to the 3rd Marine Division on Okinawa, as Commanding Officer, Fourth Marines, and Camp Commander, Camp Hansen. He later served as CO, 33rd MAU/CO, RLT-4/DepCdr, 9th MAB, during the Southeast Asia evacuation operations.

Reassigned to HQMC in August 1975, he was assigned duty as Deputy Director, Training and Education Division, Manpower Department. He was advanced to brigadier general on March 24, 1976, and presided over a special study group on the Marine Corps Reserve until June 11, 1976, when he was assigned duties as Commanding General, Landing Force Training Command, Atlantic, and Commanding General, 4th Marine Amphibious Brigade. In this later capacity, he commanded four major Marine air ground task force operations, conducted on both flanks of NATO. As CTF 403, his command responsibilities included units from seven NATO nations. Under CJTF 122 at CINCLANT, he was CTF 125 and COMMARFOR for CINCLANT contingency plans and joint exercises.

General Gray was advanced to his present grade with a date of rank of 1 April 1976, and assumed his current assignment at Quantico in October 1976.

ANNEX C

SOURCES OF INFORMATION (U)

TAB A

(U) Documents

- (U) Primary Source Material
- (U) Official Government Statements/
Reports
- (U) Congressional Testimony
- (U) Office of Secretary of Defense
Memorandums
- (U) Joint Staff Memorandums
- (U) Press Releases

TAB B

(U) Interviews

TAB C

(U) Demonstrations and On-Scene Visits

TAB A

DOCUMENTS

(U) Primary Source Material

1. (U) Special Operations Review Group, Terms of Reference, provided by Chairman, Joint Chiefs of Staff, 28 May 1980
2. (U) Hostage Rescue OPLAN
3. (U) The Joint Chiefs of Staff After-Action Report, Volumes I, II
4. (U) President Jimmy Carter, Letter to Speaker of The U.S. House of Representatives, Report in Accordance with the Warpowers Resolution of 1973 (Public Law 93-148), 26 April 1980

(U) Official Government Statements/Reports

5. (U) Presidential Statement, 0100, 25 April 1980
6. (U) Presidential Statement, 0700, 25 April 1980
7. (U) Statement by Secretary of Defense Harold Brown, 25 April 1980

(U) Congressional Testimony

- 1-61
1-62
- Capabilities*
8. ~~S~~(U) Notes of Testimony before the Senate Armed Services Committee by [REDACTED], USAF, 2 May 1980 (b)(1)(a)(1)
(b)(6)
 9. ~~S~~(U) Notes of Testimony before the Senate Armed Services Committee by [REDACTED] 2 May 1980
 10. (U) Notes of Testimony before the Senate Armed Services Committee by Colonel James H. Kyle, USAF, 2 May 1980
 11. (U) Notes of Testimony before the Senate Armed Services Committee by Colonel Charles D. Beckwith, USA, 5 May 1980
 12. ~~S~~(U) Notes of Testimony before the Senate Armed Services Committee by [REDACTED] 5 May 1980
 13. (U) Notes of Testimony before the Senate Armed Services Committee by Lieutenant General Philip C. Gast, USAF, and Major General James B. Vaught, USA, 5 May 1980

14. (U) Notes of Testimony before the House Armed Services Committee by Lieutenant General Philip C. Gast, USAF, and Major General James B. Vaught, USA, 6 May 1980
15. (U) Notes of Testimony before the Senate Armed Services Committee by Major General James B. Vaught, USA, 7 May 1980
16. ~~(S)~~(U) Notes of Testimony before the Senate Armed Services Committee by Lieutenant General Philip C. Gast, USAF, Major General James B. Vaught, USA, Colonel James H. Kyle, USAF, Colonel Charles D. Beckwith, USA, [REDACTED] (b)(1)(4)(1) (b)(6)
- 1-61
1-62
capabilities
- [REDACTED]
Charles H. Pitman, USMC, [REDACTED] and Lieutenant Colonel Edward R. Seiffert, USMC (testifying as a group), 7 May 1980
17. ~~(U)~~(U) Notes of Testimony before the House Armed Services Committee by Colonel James H. Kyle, USAF, [REDACTED] [REDACTED] 8 May 1980
18. ~~(U)~~(U) Notes of Testimony before the Senate Armed Services Committee by [REDACTED] on 23 May 1980, 27 May 1980

(U) Office of the Secretary of Defense Memorandums

19. (U) Assistant Secretary of Defense (Public Affairs) Memorandum, Iranian Aircraft Incidents, 29 April 1980
20. (U) Assistant Secretary of Defense (Comptroller) Cost Estimates for Hostage Rescue Operations, 21 May 1980

(U) Joint Staff Memorandums

21. (U) Rescue Force Personnel to Visit Washington, 3 May 1980
22. (U) Response to Senate Armed Services Committee Request, Organizational Chart of the Iranian Hostage Rescue Mission and information on the eight helicopters used in the hostage rescue mission, 5 May 1980
23. (U) In Response to Congressional Queries, 6 May 1980
24. (U) Comments on New York Times Story by Richard Burt, 6 May 1980
25. (U) JCS Public Affairs Guidance: Iran Rescue Mission, 6 May 1980

UNCLASSIFIED

26. (U) Response to Congressional Query on Hostage Rescue Mission, 7 May 1980
27. (U) Helicopter Navigational Equipment, 8 May 1980
28. (U) Awards for Personnel Who Participated in the Hostage Rescue Attempt, 8 May 1980
29. (U) Helicopter Performance During Training and Rehearsals for the Hostage Rescue Attempt in Iran, 8 May 1980
30. (U) Request for Cost Estimate of Iranian Rescue Effort (from Senator Ernest F. Hollings), 8 May 1980
31. (U) Helicopter Maintenance Records, 12 May 1980
32. (U) Response to Query on Hostage Rescue Mission, (from House Appropriations Committee), 12 May 1980
33. (U) Questions of SECDEF during Appearance before Senate Armed Services Committee on 8 May 1980, 13 May 1980
34. (U) Map/Chart Classification, 13 May 1980
35. (U) Questions of CJCS and SECDEF during Appearance before the Senate Armed Services Committee, 13 May 1980
36. (U) Questions of SECDEF during Appearance before the Senate Armed Services Committee, 14 May 1980
37. (U) OSD Questions Concerning Rescue Attempt in Iran, 15 May 1980
38. (U) Request for Information on the Hostage Rescue Attempt in Iran, 16 May 1980
39. (U) The New York Times Query concerning a map related to the Iran Hostage Rescue Attempt, 16 May 1980
40. (U) Response to Query on Hostage Rescue Mission, (House Appropriations Committee), 16 May 1980
41. (U) The Washington Star Query Concerning the Iran Hostage Rescue Attempt, 17 May 1980
42. (U) Talker and Backgrounder on Intelligence Support to the Iran Hostage Rescue Mission (House Permanent Select Committee on Intelligence requests), 17 May 1980

43. (U) Comments on Army Times article of 19 May 1980, undated
44. ~~(U)~~ Notes Taken During Interviews by Senator Warner and Senate Armed Services Committee Staff Personnel [REDACTED] (b)(1)(A) (b)(6)
[REDACTED] 19 May 1980
45. ~~(U)~~ Notes Taken During Interviews by Senate Armed Services Committee Staff Personnel [REDACTED], 20 May 1980
46. (U) Request for Cost: Senator Hollings' letter of 6 May 1980, 21 May 1980
47. (U) Cost Associated With Iran Hostage Rescue Attempt, 21 May 1980
48. (U) Inserts for the Record for Testimony before the Senate Armed Services Committee on 7 May 1980, 21 May 1980
49. (U) Congressional Request for Information Concerning Iran Hostage Rescue Attempt, 22 May 1980
50. (U) Inserts for the Record for Testimony before the Senate Armed Services Committee, 22 May 1980
51. (U) Possible Compromise of Classified Information Regarding the Hostage Rescue Attempt, 23 May 1980
52. (U) Senate Armed Services Committee Request for Information Concerning Iran Hostage Rescue Attempt, 23 May 1980
53. (U) Response to Query on Hostage Rescue Mission (House Appropriations Committee), 23 May 1980.
54. (U) Helicopter Comparability, 23 May 1980
55. (U) Possible Compromise of Classified Information Regarding the Hostage Rescue Attempt, 27 May 1980
56. (U) Query from Congressman Wright's Office, 27 May 1980
57. (U) Query from Lisa Myers of The Washington Star, 28 May 1980
58. (U) Query from Congressman Levitas's Office, 4 June 1980
59. (U) Questions on Rescue, 9 June 1980

1-61
1-62

capalibilities

(U) Press Releases

60. (U) News Conference by Secretary of Defense Harold Brown and General David C. Jones, USAF, Chairman, JCS, 25 April 1980
61. (U) Transcript of Backgrounder Brief by Lieutenant General John S. Pustay, USAF, 26 April 1980
62. (U) Transcript of Face The Nation, CBS Television, Guest, Harold Brown, Secretary of Defense, 27 April 1980
63. (U) Press Release, Casualties from Rescue Operations in Iran, 28 April 1980
64. (U) News Conference by Secretary of Defense Harold Brown and General David C. Jones, USAF, Chairman, Joint Chiefs of Staff, 29 April 1980
65. (U) News Conference by Assistant Secretary of Defense Thomas B. Ross, 1 May 1980
66. (U) Address by Admiral Thomas B. Hayward, USN, Chief of Naval Operations, 1 May 1980
67. (U) News Conference by Assistant Secretary of Defense Thomas B. Ross, 6 May 1980
68. (U) Department of Defense, Executive Summary of Hostage Rescue Attempt, transmitted by Secretary of Defense letter, 6 May 1980
69. (U) Press Interview, Secretary of Defense Harold Brown, 8 May 1980
70. (U) Backgrounder on Iranian Hostage Rescue Mission by Major General James B. Vaught, USA, 12 May 1980

UNCLASSIFIED

TAB B

INTERVIEWS
(BY DATE) (U)

1. (U) General David C. Jones, USAF, Chairman, Joint Chiefs of Staff, 30 May 1980
2. (U) Major General Charles W. Dyke, USA, Vice Director for Operations, Joint Staff, 30 May 1980
3. (U) Lieutenant General Philip C. Gast, USAF, Deputy Commander, Joint Task Force, 30 May 1980
4. (U) Major General James B. Vaught, USA, Commander, Joint Task Force, 30 May 1980
5. (U) Admiral James D. Watkins, USN, Vice Chief of Naval Operations, 2 June 1980
6. (U) General Robert H. Barrow, USMC, Commandant of the Marine Corps, 2 June 1980
7. (U) General Lew Allen, Jr., USAF, Chief of Staff, US Air Force, 2 June 1980
8. (U) General Edward C. Myer, USA, Chief of Staff, US Army, 2 June 1980
9. (U) Colonel Charles D. Beckwith, USA, Commander, Delta Force, 3 June 1980
10. (U) Colonel James M. Perryman, USMC, Project Manager for H-53/ H-46 (PMA-261), Naval Air Systems Command, 3 June 1980
11. (U) Commander Arne B. Bruflat, USN, Deputy Project Manager for H-53 (PMA-261), Naval Air Systems Command, 3 June 1980
12. (U) Captain Wayne Purser, USAF, Airlift and Special Operations Division (XOCTA), Directorate of Operations and Readiness, Headquarters USAF, 3 June 1980
13. (U) Lieutenant Colonel Gerald Varnon, USA, Combat Division, Requirements Directorate, Office of Deputy Chief of Staff for Operations and Readiness, USA, 3 June 1980
14. (U) Lieutenant Colonel Charles Densford, USA, Aviation Systems Division (DAMA-WSA), Office of Deputy Chief of Staff for Research, Development and Acquisition, USA, 3 June 1980

~~SECRET~~

(S) (U) (C) (S)

[REDACTED]

delete 16. (U) Colonel James H. Kyle, USAF, Deputy Commander for Air Operations, Joint Task Force, 4 June 1980

[REDACTED]

18. (U) Lieutenant General Leroy Manor, USAF (Ret.), Commander, Son Tay Rescue Operation, "Briefing on Son Tay" 6 June 1980

19. (U) Lieutenant General Philip D. Shutler, USMC, Director for Operations, Joint Staff, 9 June 1980

20. (U) Admiral Stansfield Turner, USN (Ret.) Director of Central Intelligence, 10 June 1980

21. (U) Joint meeting with all task force and subordinate Commanders, 16 June 1980

[REDACTED]

23. (U) Admiral Thomas B. Hayward, USN, Chief of Naval Operations, 16 June 1980

~~SECRET~~

TAB C

DEMONSTRATIONS AND ON-SCENE VISITS
(BY DATE) (U)

1. (U) Tapes of Command Net recorded aboard the USS NIMITZ,
2 June 1980

1-61

Handwritten notes:
1-61
2-2-80

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

(b)(1)(a)(i)



ANNEX D

1-63

1-64

(1/11/64)

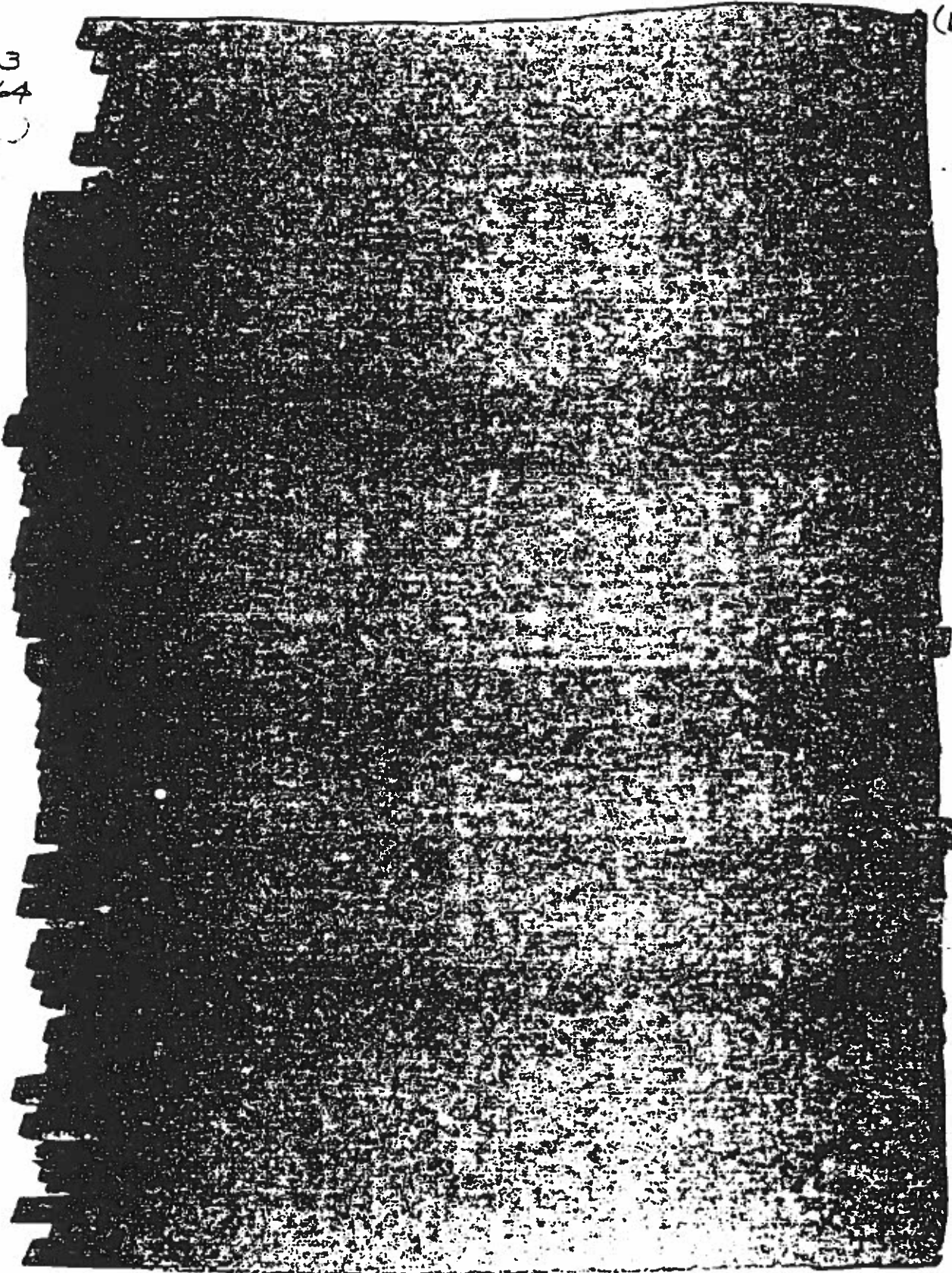


(b)(1)(a)(1)

(b)(5)

1-63
1-64

(b)(1)(a)(1)
(b)(5)

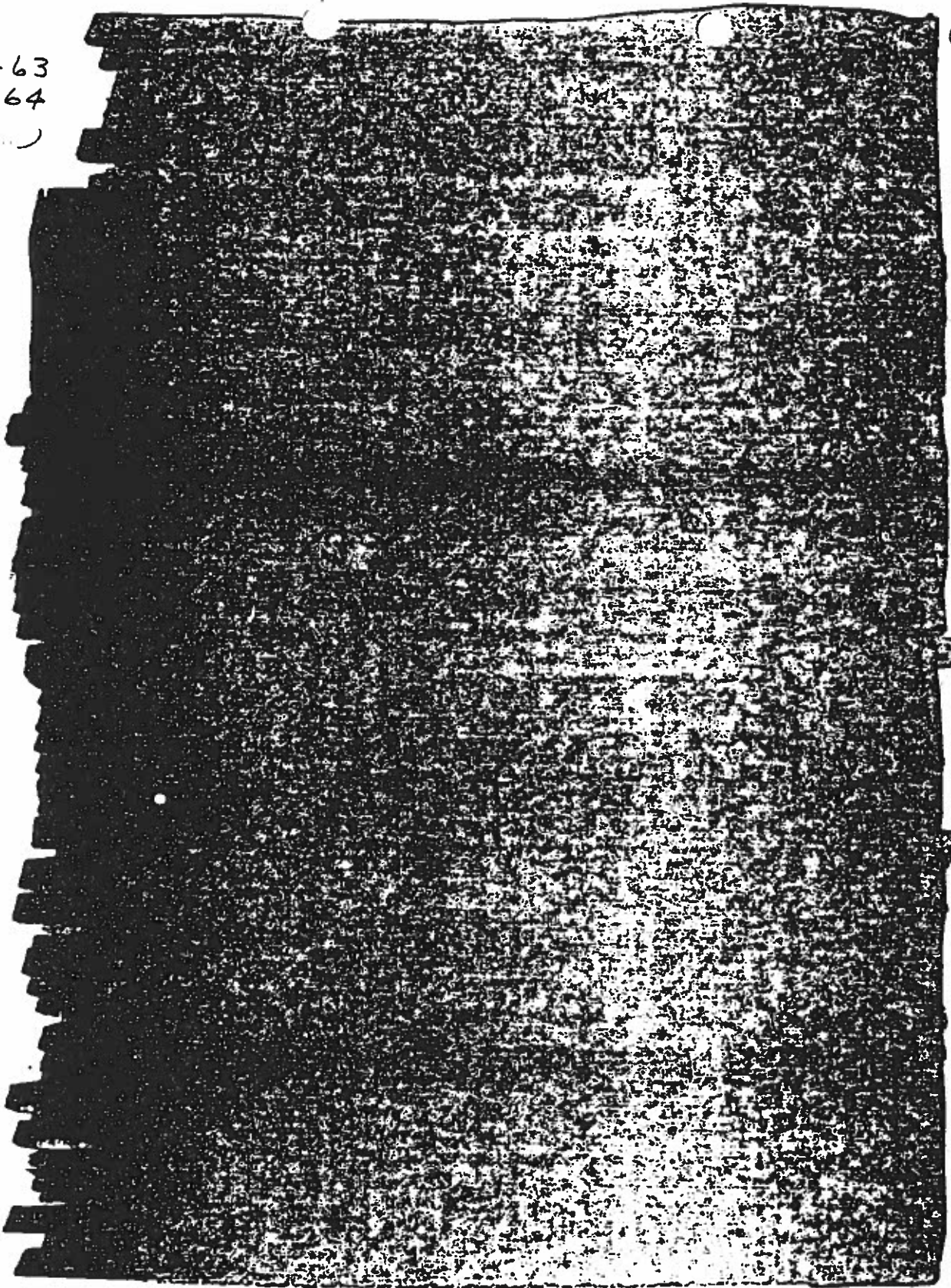


1-63

1-64

(b)(1)(a)(1)

(b)(5)



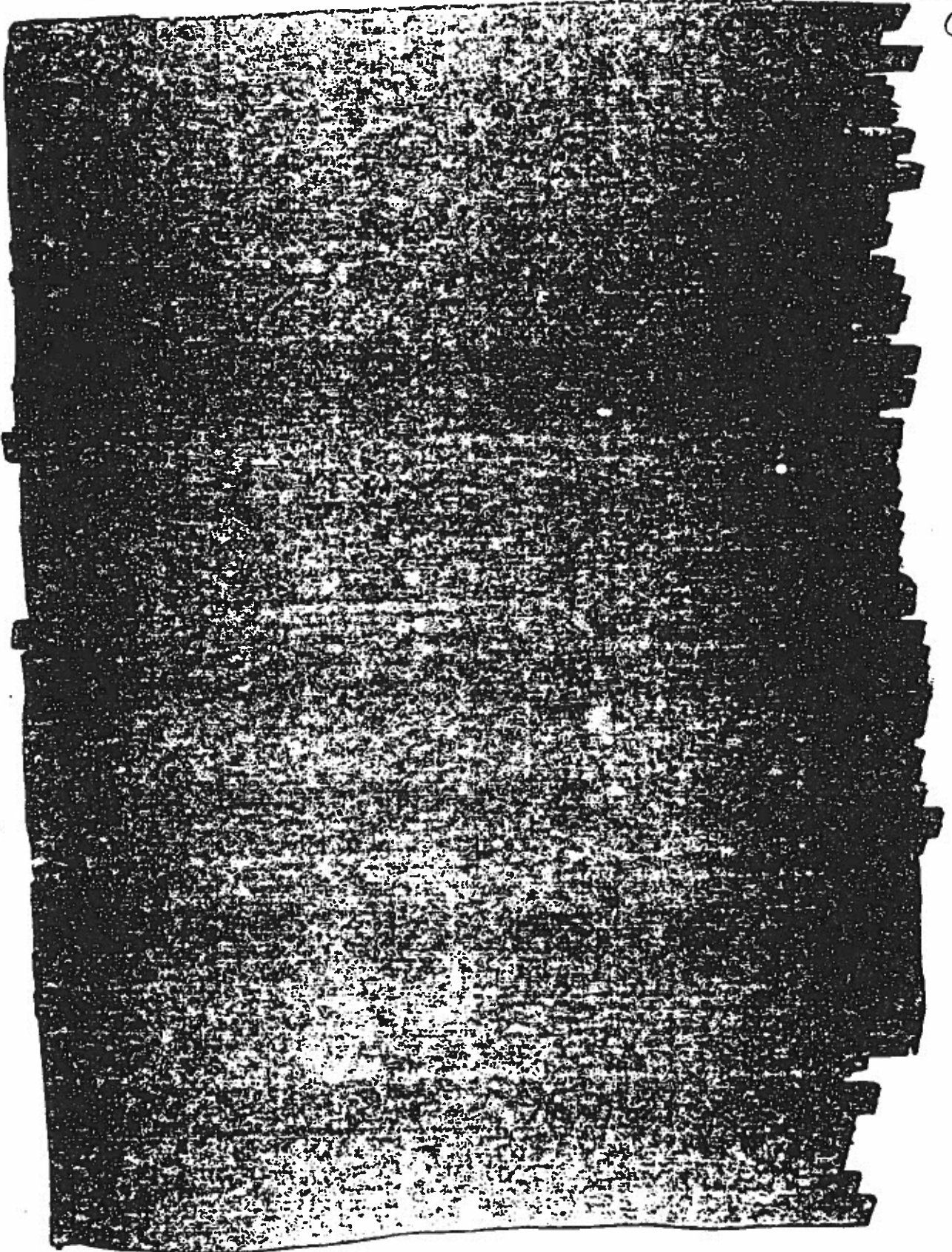
D-3

TOP SECRET

(b)(1)(a)
(b)(5)

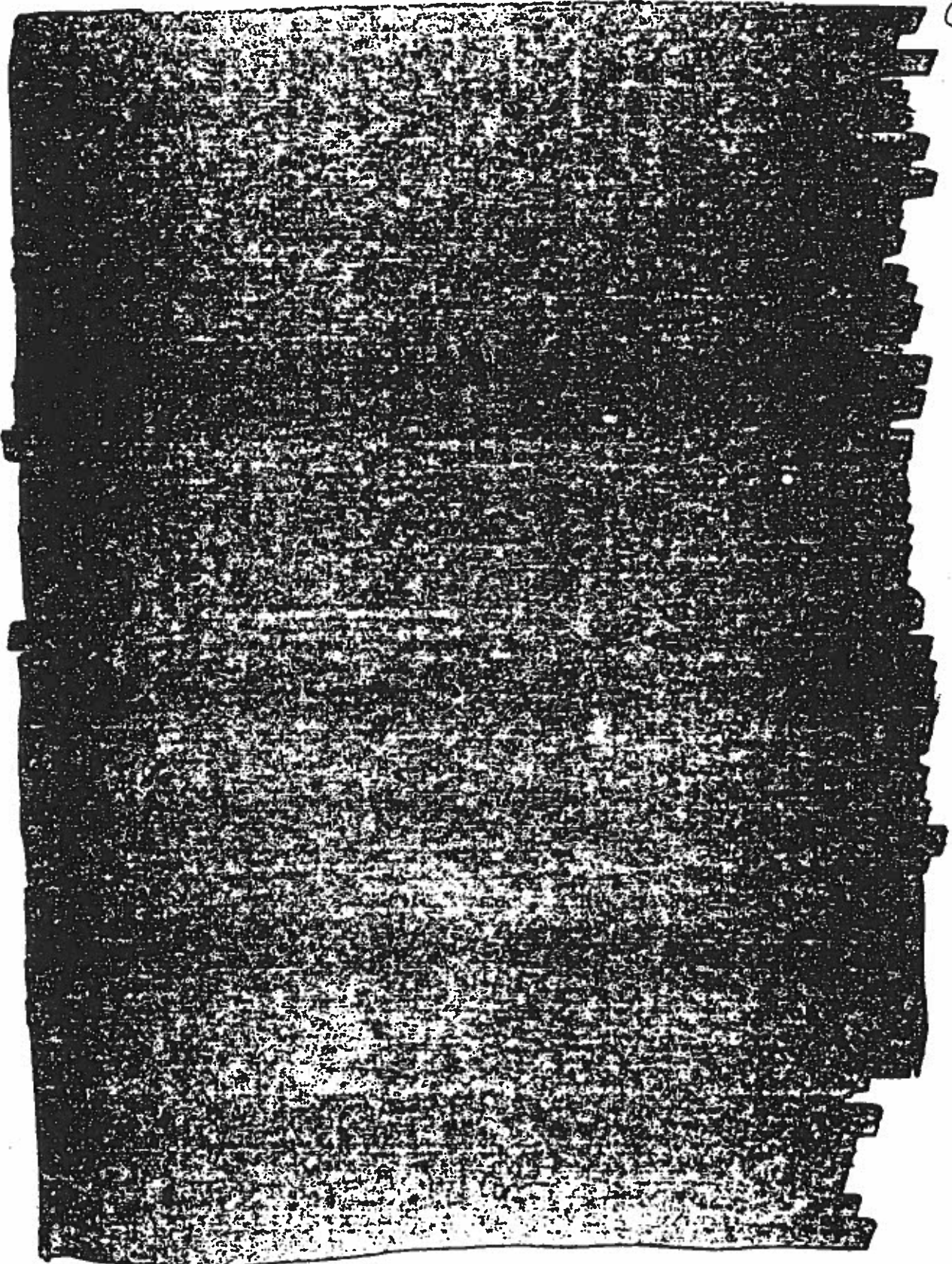
1-63
1-64

Plan



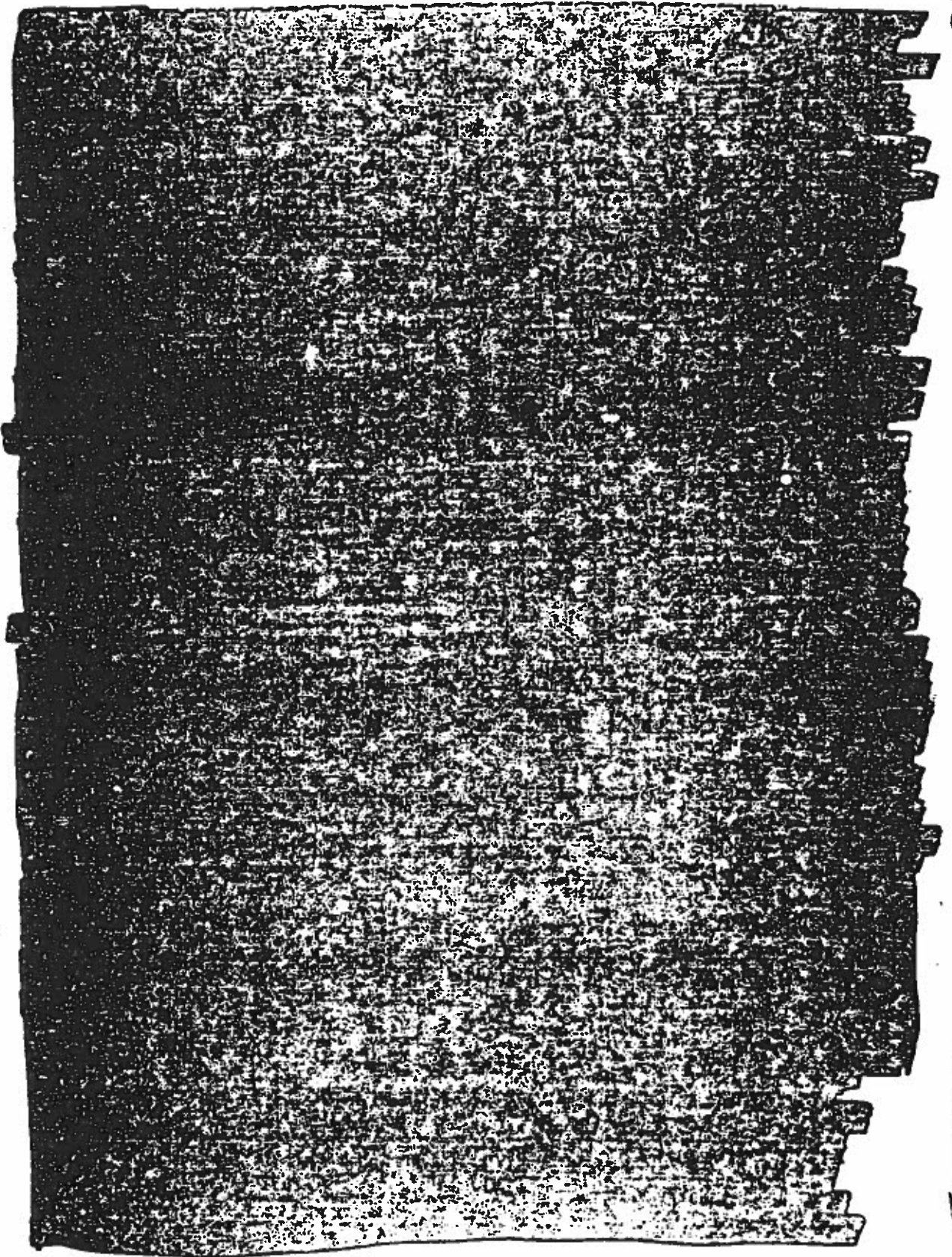
(b)(1)(C)(1)
(b)(5)

1-63
1-64
J.W.



(b)(1)(a)
(b)(5)

1-63
1-64



~~TOP SECRET~~
~~TOP SECRET~~

ANNEX E

HELICOPTER FORCE SIZE (U)

- Tab A (U) JTF Analysis of Helicopter Requirements
- Tab B (U) Helicopter Reliability Figures
- Tab C (U) JTF Helicopter Special Mission Training Plan,
21 November 1979 - 15 April 1980

~~TOP SECRET~~
~~TOP SECRET~~

ANNEX E

HELICOPTER FORCE SIZE (U)

(S) The basis for the numbers of helicopters used on the rescue mission has received special emphasis inasmuch as the mission was aborted on the morning of 25 April 1980 because the number of RH-53D helicopters available to proceed was less than required.

1-65
1-66
(b) (1) (a) (1)
(b) (1) (a) (2)
(b) (5)



1-65

(b)(1)(a)(1)
(b)(1)(a)(2)

Done
1-66
submittal
1-66

(b)(5)

(b)(5)

1-66

(b)(5)

1-66

(b)(5)

7-65

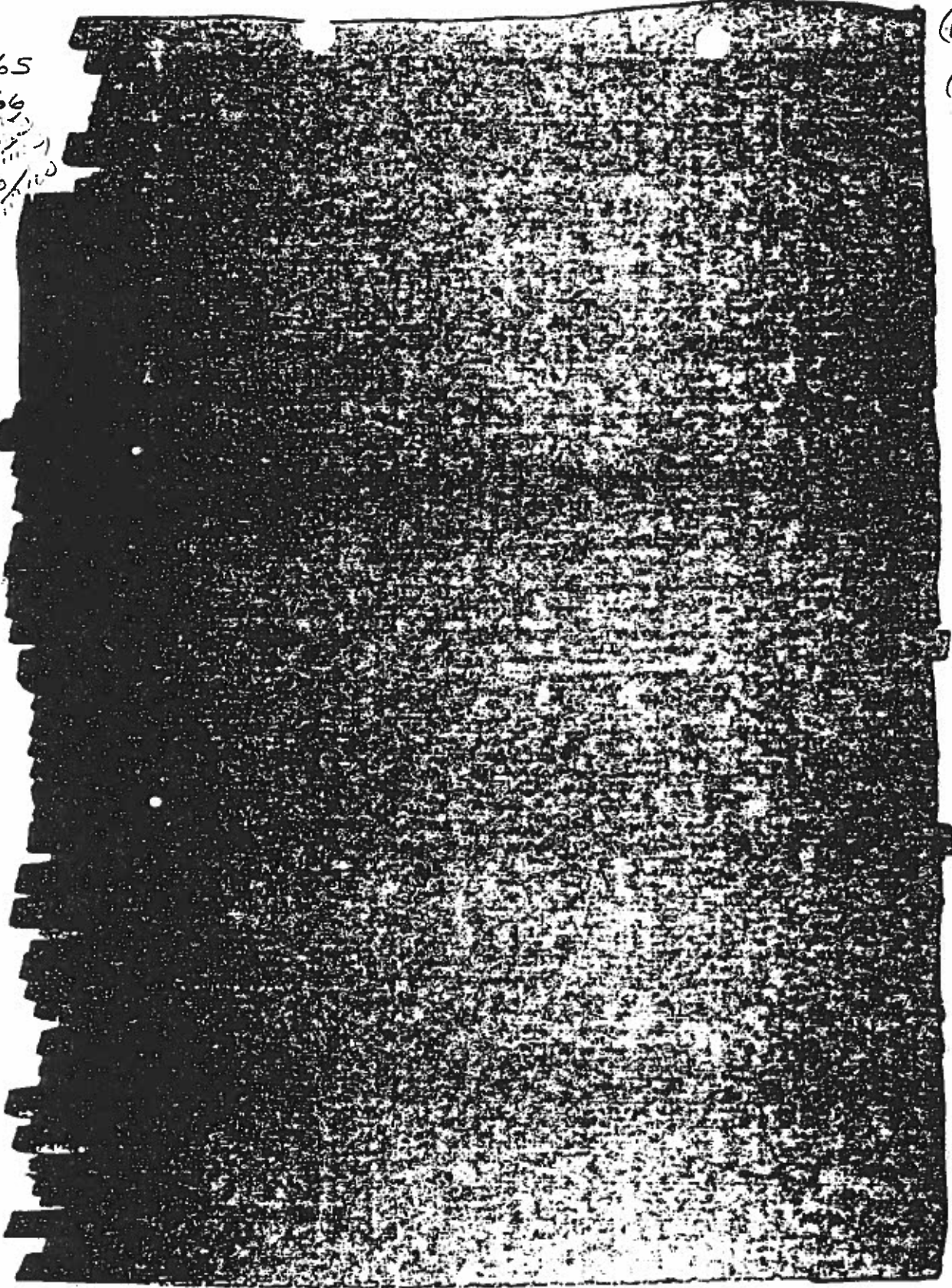
1-66
plan

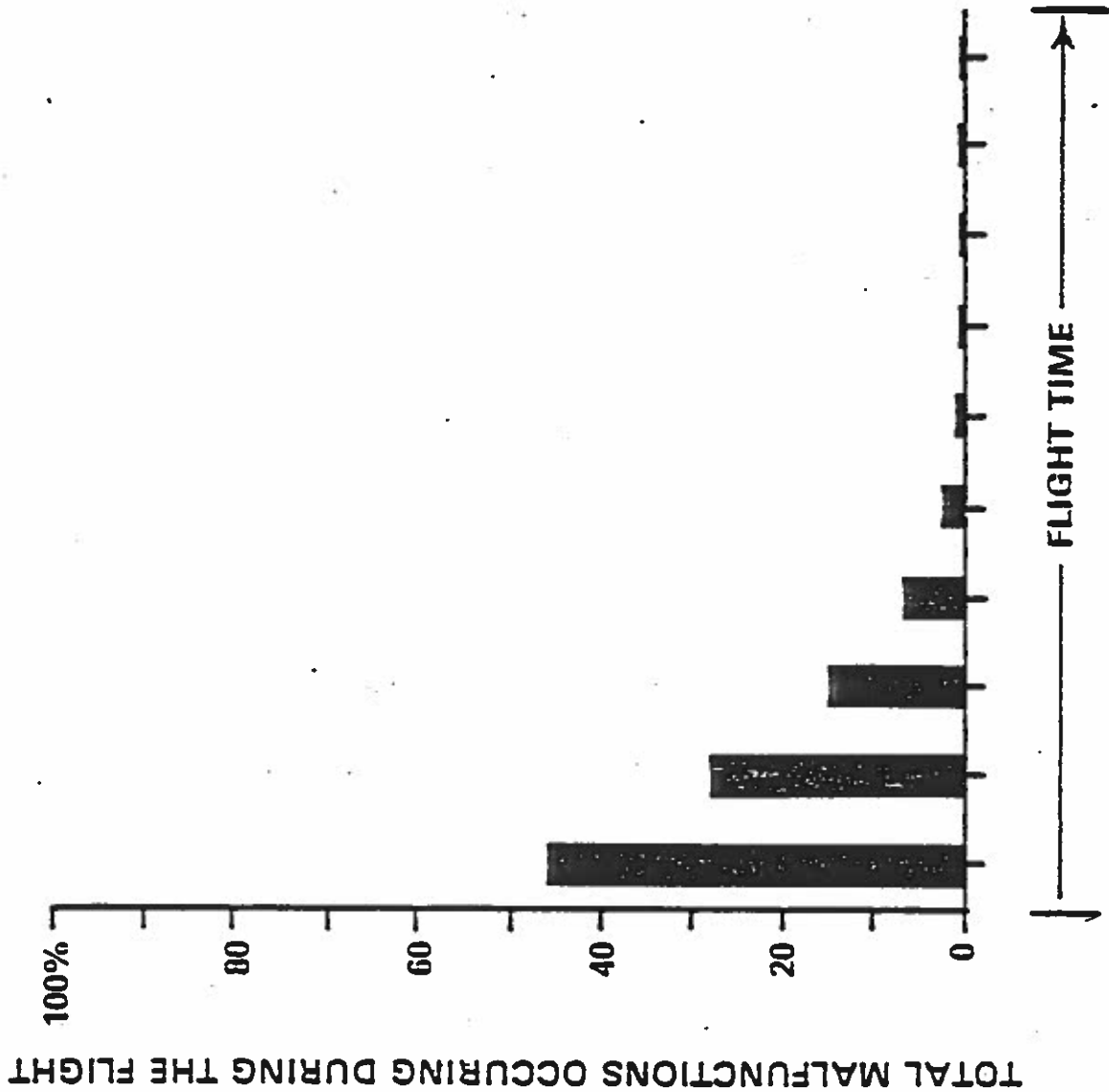
10/10/60
10/10/60

(b)(1)(a)(1)

(b)(1)(a)(2)

(b)(5)





(U) FIGURE E-1. TYPICAL HISTOGRAM OF MALFUNCTIONS AS A FUNCTION OF FLIGHT TIME

~~SECRET~~

(b)(1)(a)(c)

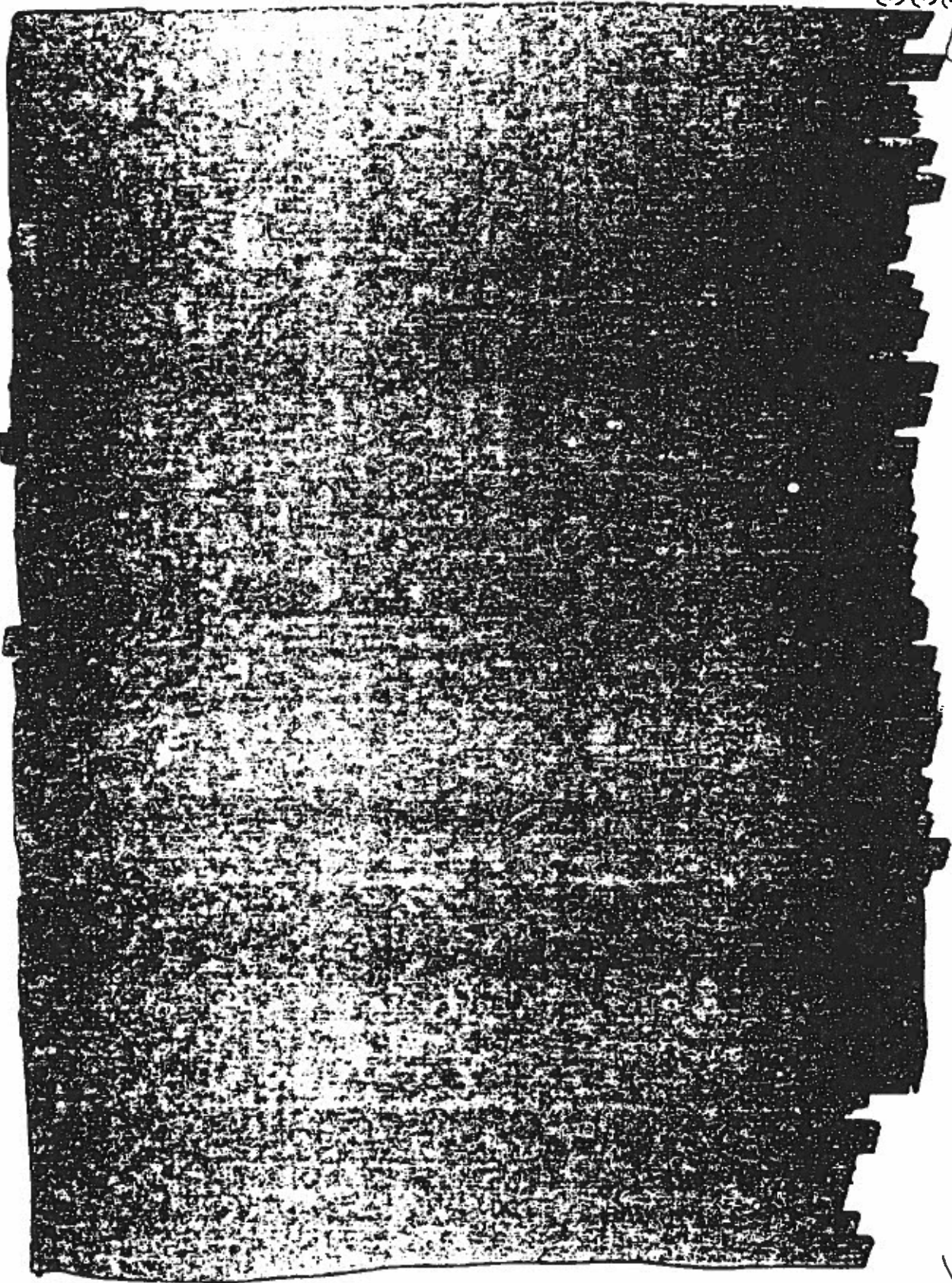
(b)(1)(a)(2)

(b)(1)

1-65

1-66

Handwritten notes:
1-65
1-66
A
B
C
D
E
F
G
H
I
J
K
L
M
N
O
P
Q
R
S
T
U
V
W
X
Y
Z

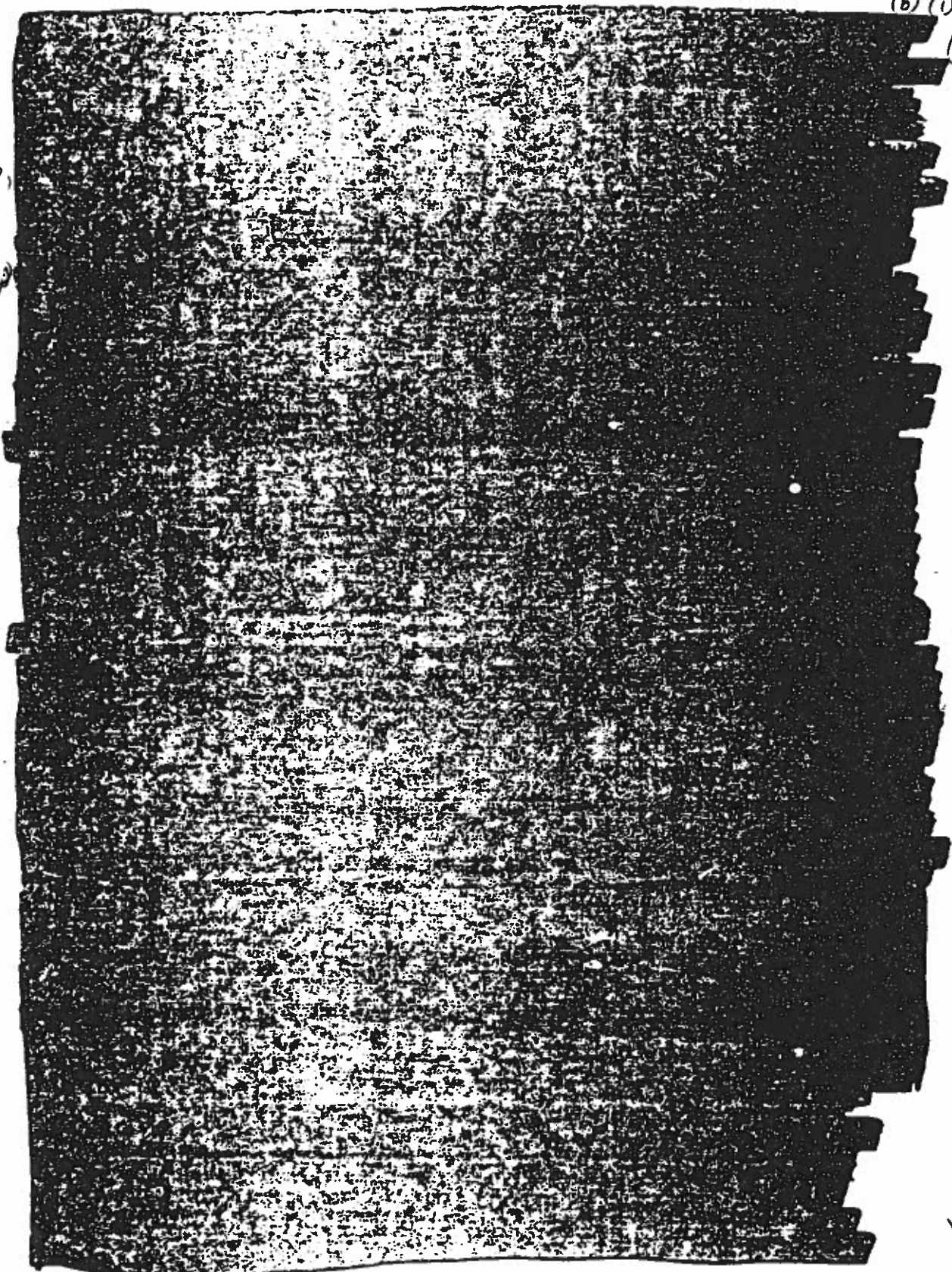


~~SECRET~~

(b) (1)(a)(1)
(b) (1)(a)(2)
(b) (1)

1-65
1-66

Plans
Systems
Capabilities
Systems
vulnerabilities

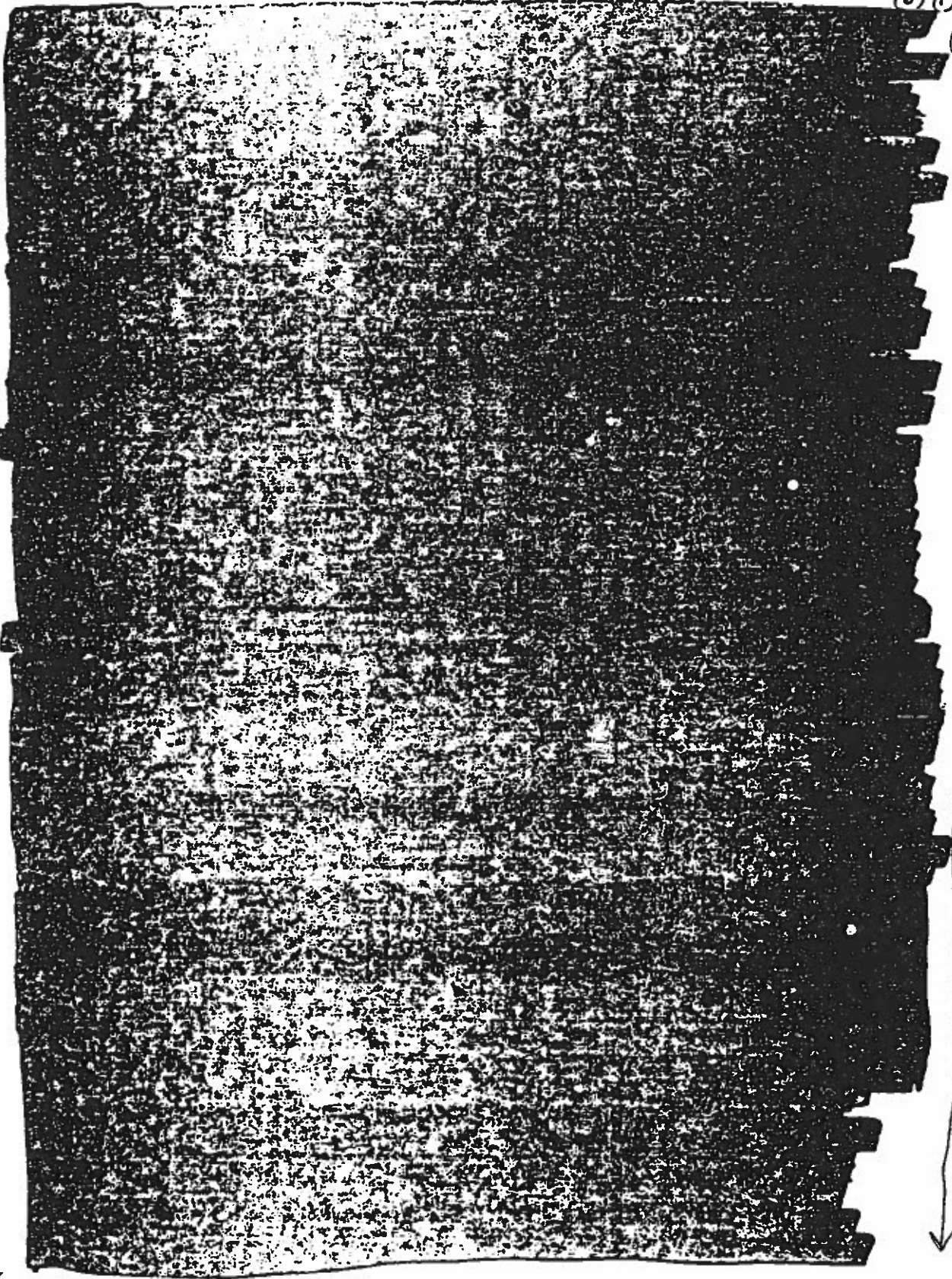


~~SECRET~~

(b)(1)(a)
(b)(1)(a)
(b)(c)

1-65
1-66

Plans,
systems
capabilities
reports
activities



1-65

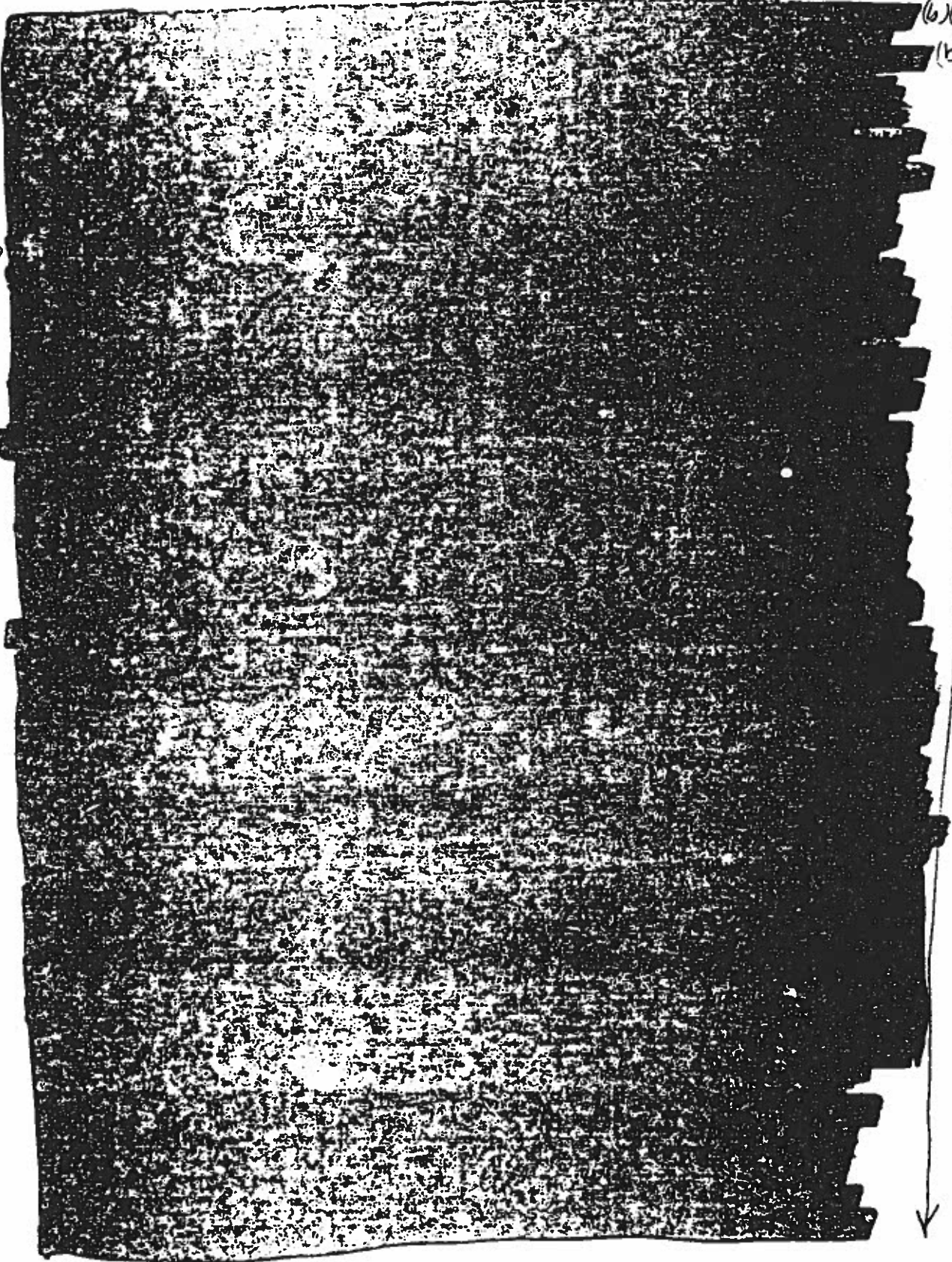
1-66

plans,
system,
calculations,
for [unclear]
[unclear]

(b)(1)(a)

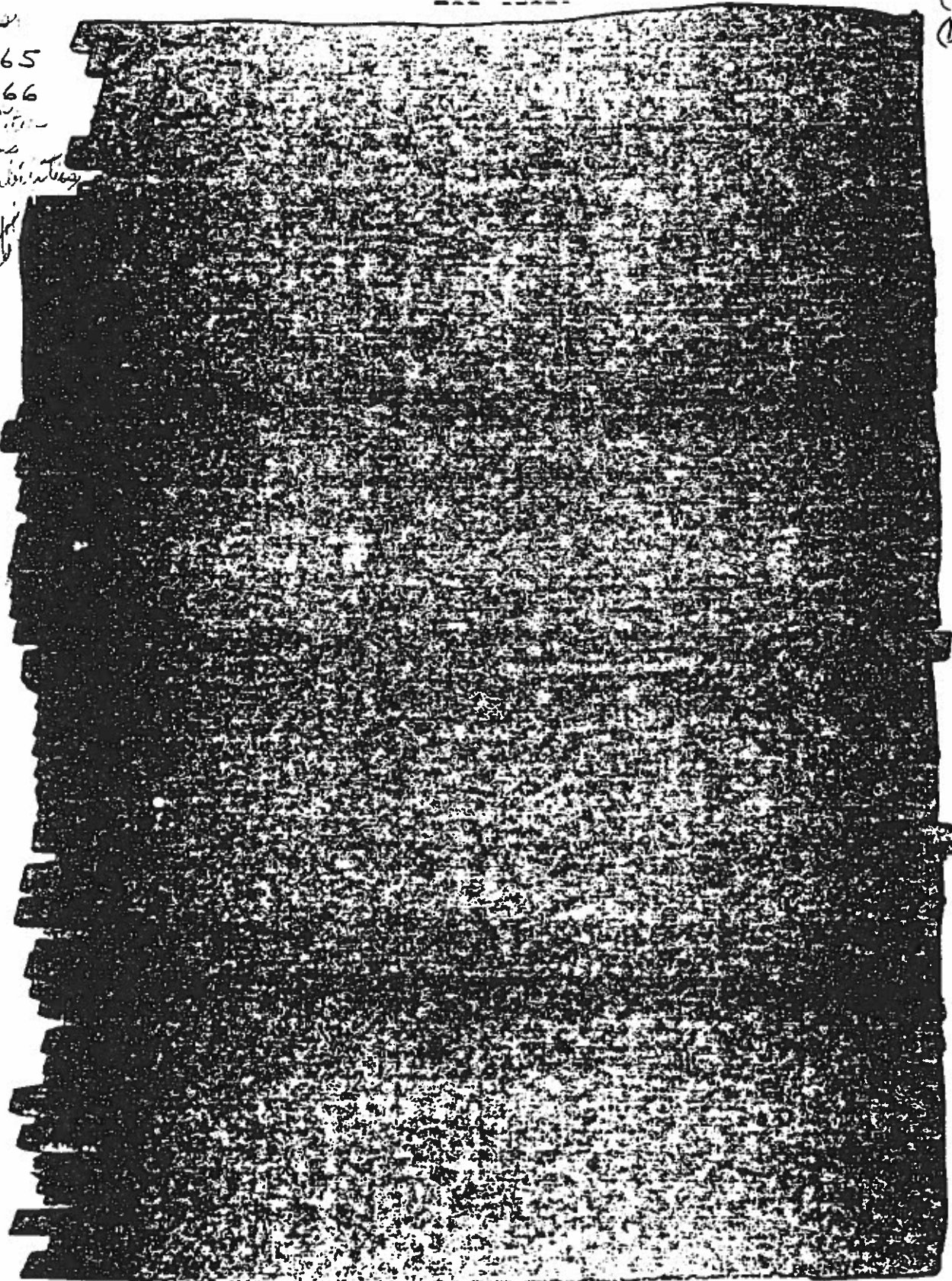
(b)(1)(b)

(b)(1)(c)



1-65
1-66
systems
class
...

(b)(1)(a)(1)
(b)(1)(a)(2)
(b)(5)



~~TOP SECRET~~
~~FOR OFFICIAL USE ONLY~~

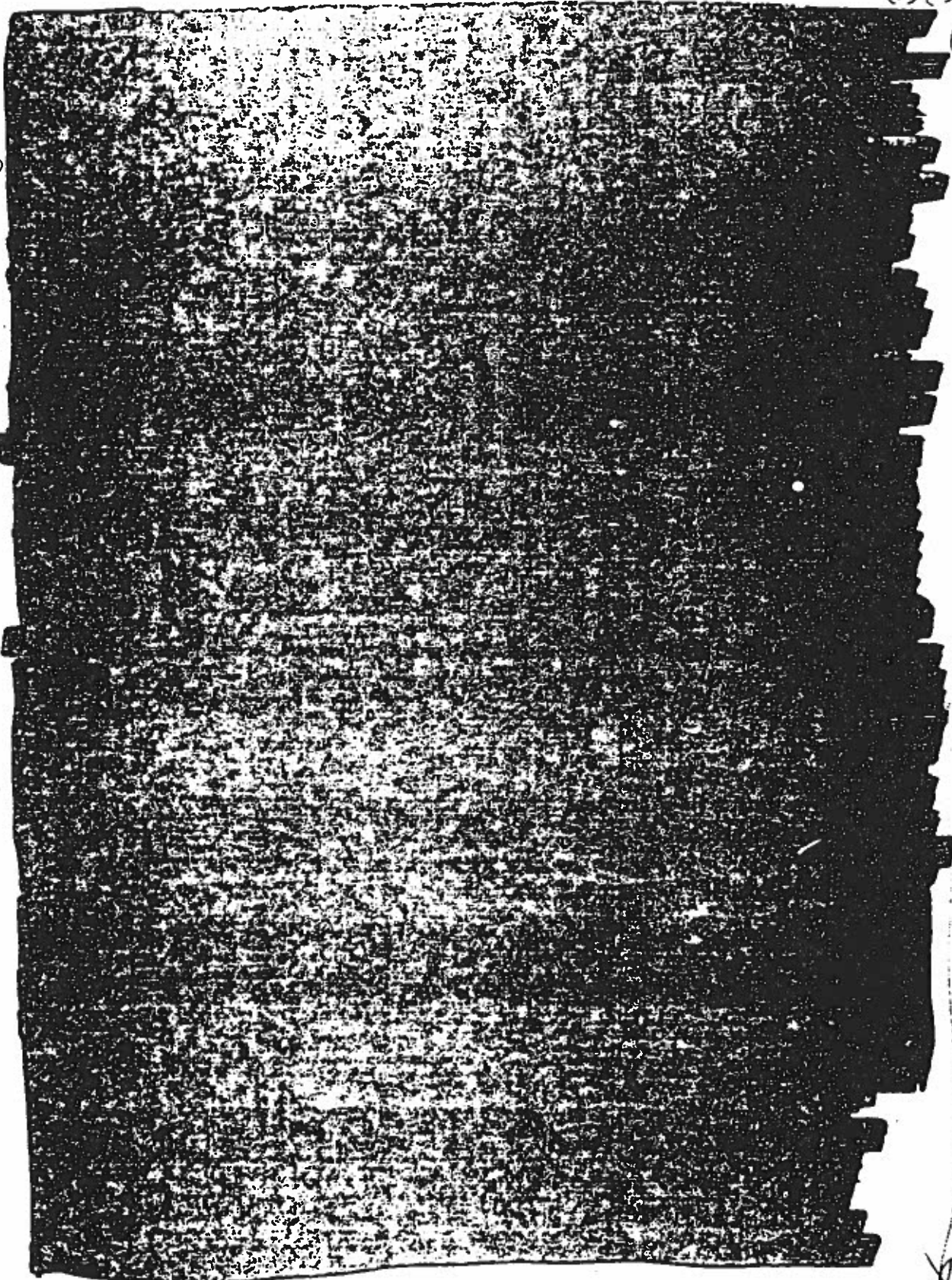
(b)(1)(a)
(b)(1)(a)

(b)(1)(a)

1-65

1-66

plans
rehabilitation,
system
rehabilitation
rehabilitation



~~TOP SECRET~~
~~TOP SECRET~~

(TS) The foregoing discussion leads to the conclusion that eight helicopters aboard NIMITZ represented greater risk than perceived by mission planners and reviewers. However, the JTF planners and Joint Chiefs of Staff were led to believe the risks of mechanical failure were lower than actual. This, coupled with their concern for OPSEC, appeared to have influenced their decisions to rely on eight helicopters. Whether or not additional RH-53Ds would have compromised OPSEC and thus prematurely aborted the rescue attempt is conjecture and cannot be quantified.

(TS) On balance, it appears that the certainty of higher risk resulting from too few helicopters might have outweighed the uncertainty of compromise; that a larger helicopter force was feasible, and that, if provided, the larger force could most likely have allowed the mission to continue to its final phases.

~~TOP SECRET~~
~~TOP SECRET~~

TAB A

JTF ANALYSIS OF HELICOPTER REQUIREMENTS (U)

- I. (U) JTF Pre-Mission Analysis of Helicopter Requirements
- II. (U) JTF Post-Mission Assessment of Helicopter Force Adequacy

PRE-MISSION ANALYSIS OF
HELICOPTER REQUIREMENTS (U)

I. (U) Purpose. To discuss RH-53D reliability, availability, and maintainability (RAM) Historical Data.

1-65

*Class,
systems
experiences,
systems
maintainability
RAM*



(b)(1)(a)(1)
(b)(1)(a)(2)

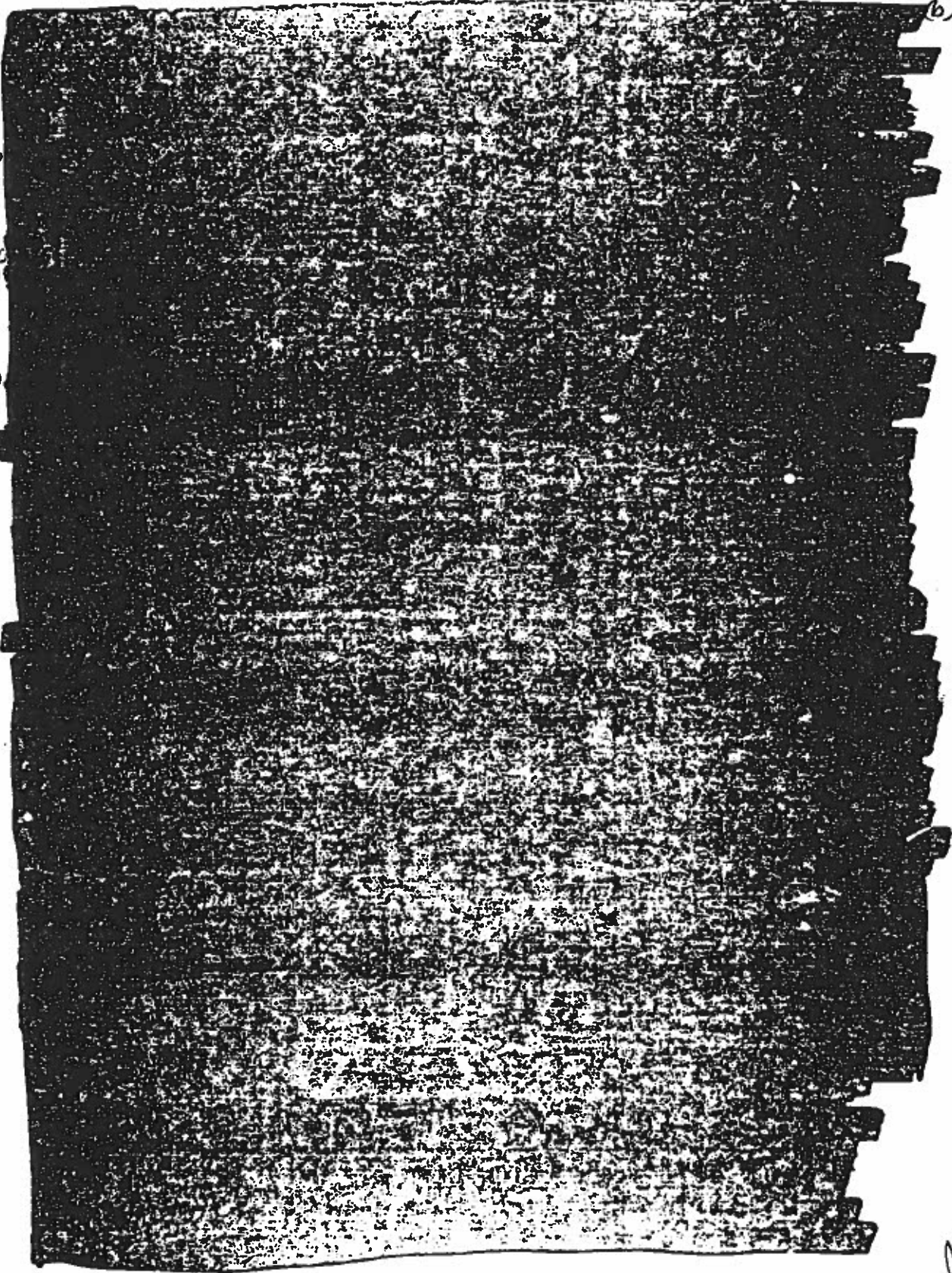


III. (U) Main Points



(b)(1)(a)
(b)(1)(a)

1-65
plans,
vulnerabilities,
systems
capabilities,
operations
vulnerabilities



II

JTF POST-MISSION ASSESSMENT OF
HELICOPTER FORCE ADEQUACY (U)

I. (U) Purpose. To assess the adequacy of the number of helicopters positioned for the mission.

II. (U) Background

1-65
1-66

*plans,
systems
initiatives,
plans,
initiatives*

[REDACTED]

(b)(1)(a)1,
(b)(1)(a)2
(b)(5)

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

III. (U) Main Points

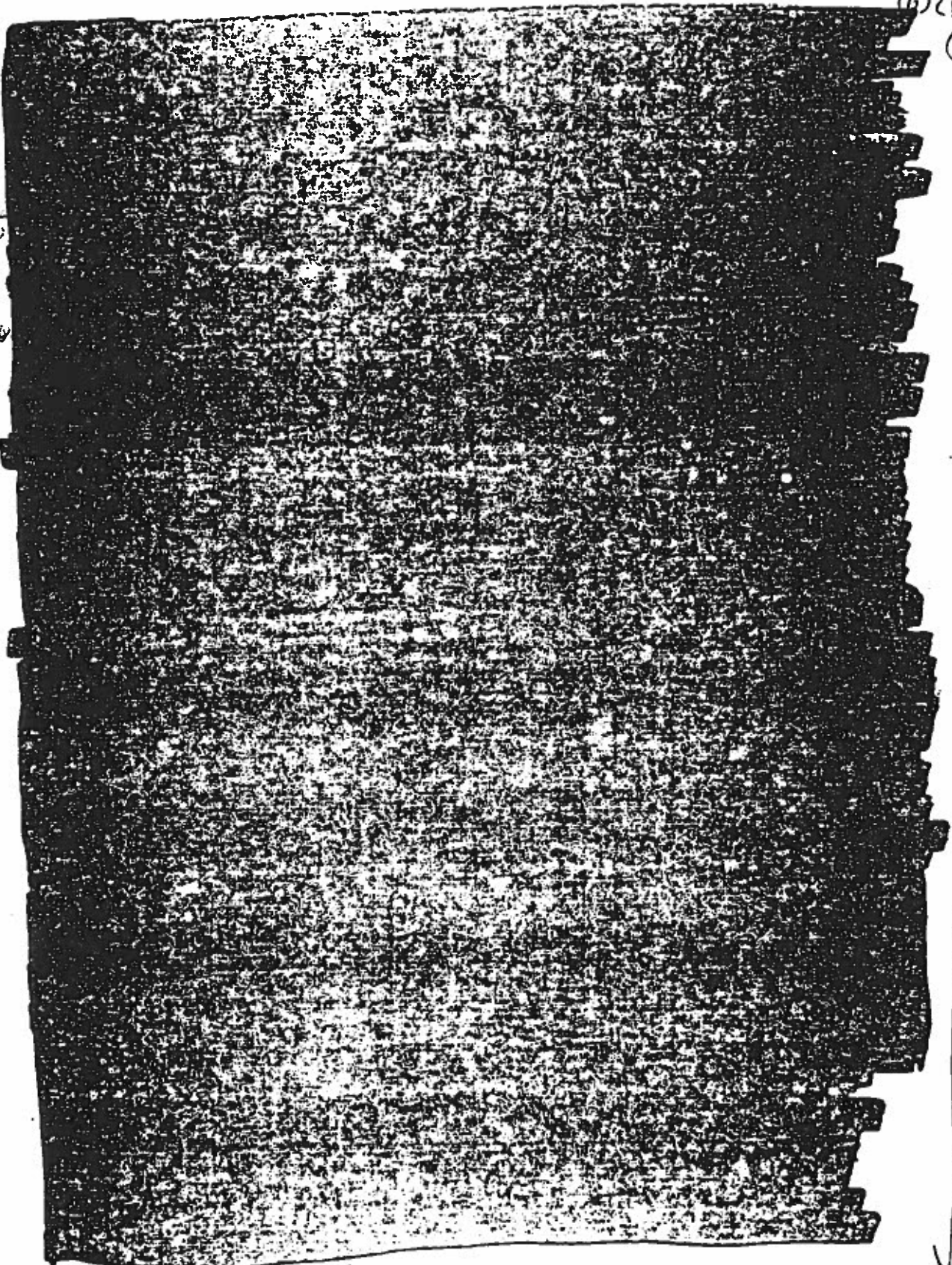
[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

(b) (1)(a)
(b) (1)(a)(2)
(b) (5)

1-65
1-66

plans,
systems
capabilities
systems
vulnerabilities

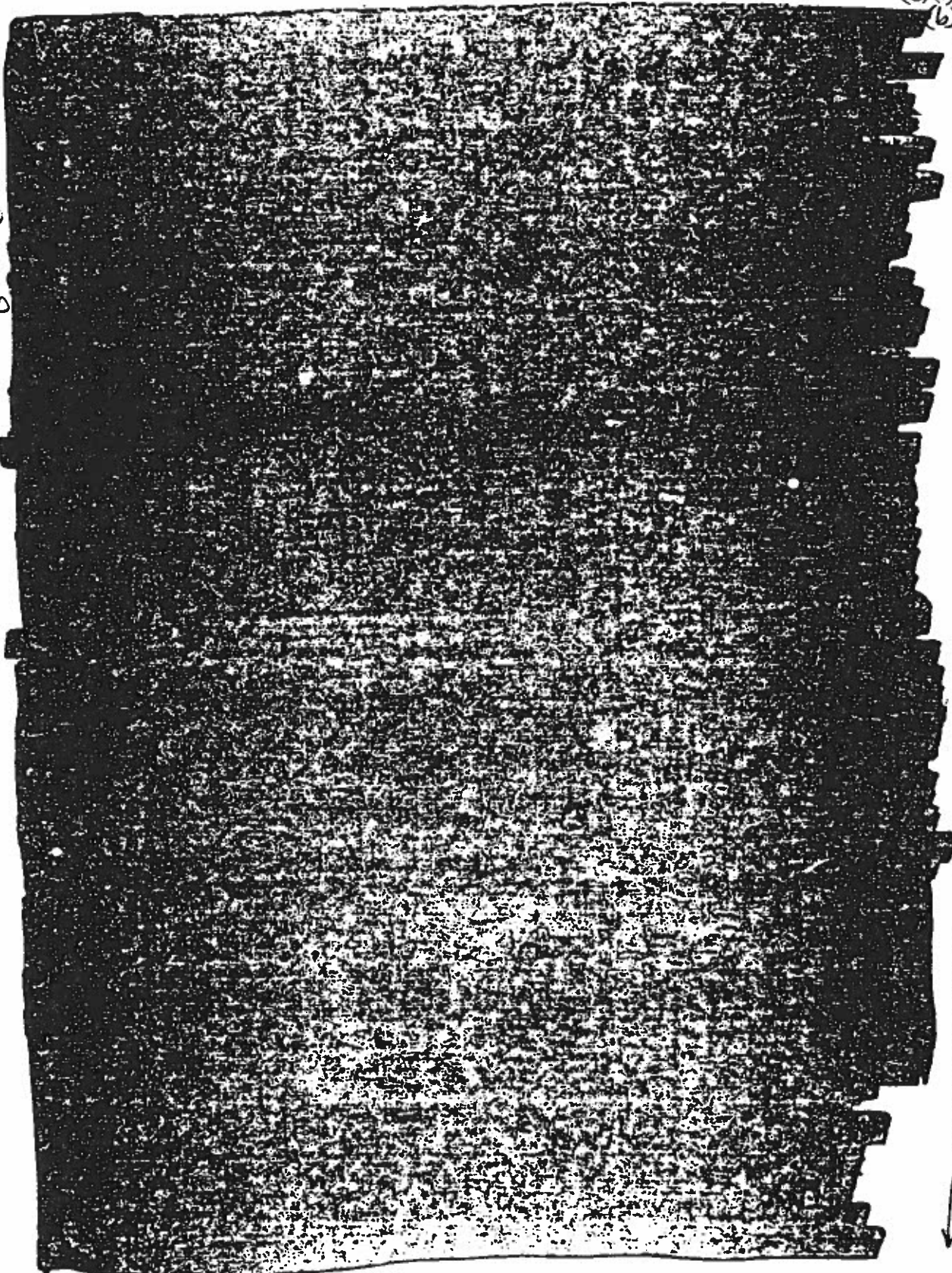


E-17

(b)(1)(A)(1)
(b)(1)(A)
(b)(5)

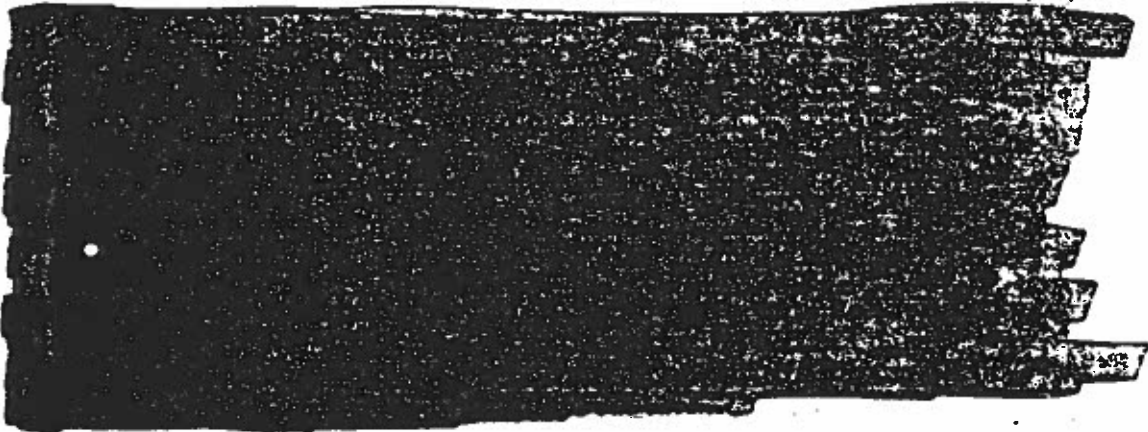
1-65
1-66

plans,
systems
development

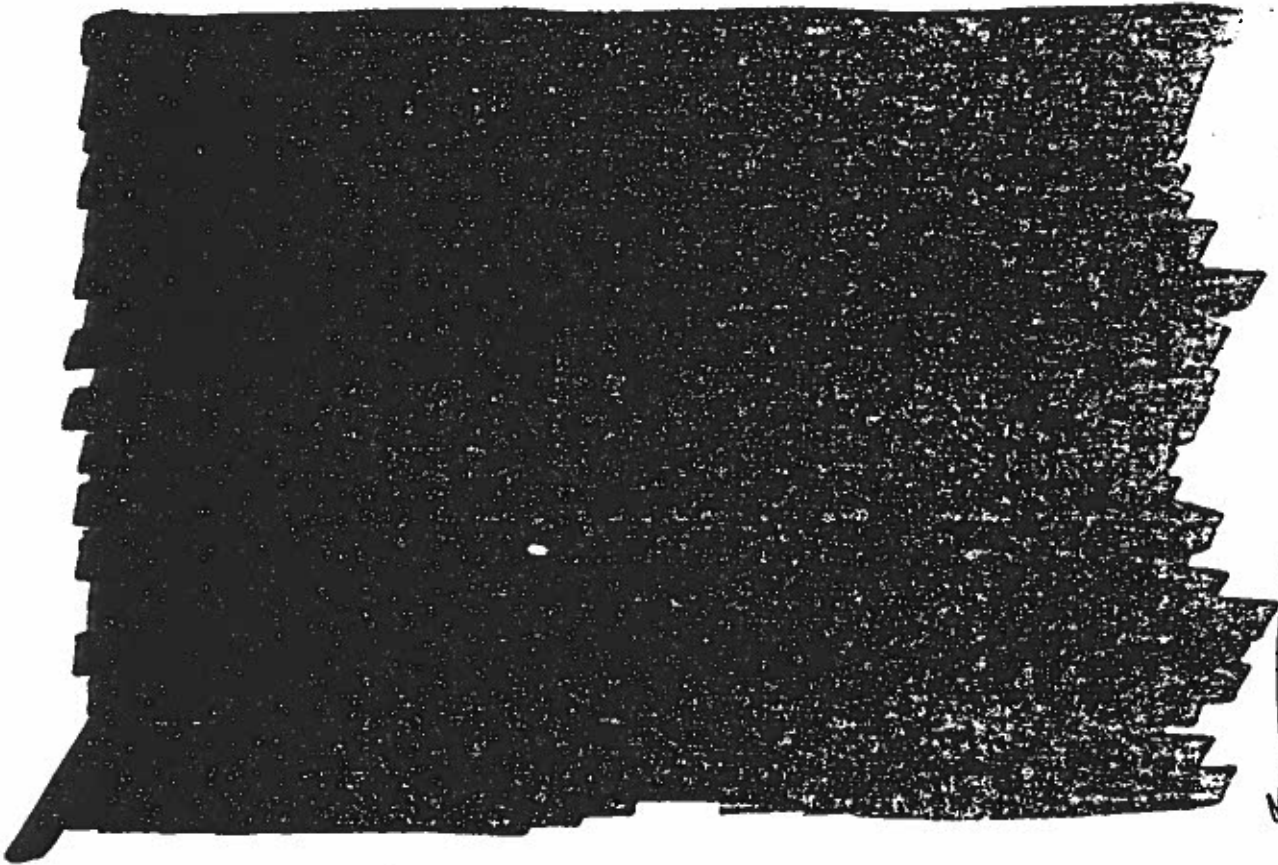


(b)(1)(a)(1)
(b)(1)(a)(2)
(b)(5)

1-65
1-66
plans,
systems
capabilities,
systems
responsibilities,
unit
capabilities



IV. (U) Helicopter Assessment Summary. Regarding the adequacy of RH-53D helicopters planned for the mission, it is concluded that:



TAB B

HELICOPTER RELIABILITY FIGURES

- Figure E-5. Expected Number of RH-53D To Arrive Extraction Site, Given Eight RH-053D Are Programmed To Launch From NIMITZ
- Figure E-6. Probability of At Least Five RH-53D Reaching Extraction Site, Given Six, Seven, Eight, or Nine Are Programmed To Launch From NIMITZ
- Figure E-7. Probability of At Least Five RH-53D Arrive At Destination as a Fraction of Time, Given Eight RH-53D Take Off
- Figure E-8. Probability of At Least Five RH-53D Arrive At Destination as a Fraction of Time, Given Seven RH-53D Take Off
- Figure E-9. Probability of Having At Least Five RH-53D Arrive Extraction Site, Given Six or Five Depart Desert One

1-65

1-66

Plan

*systems
capabilities
systems
inabilities*

(b)(1)(a)X

(b)(1)(a)X

(b)(1)(a)X

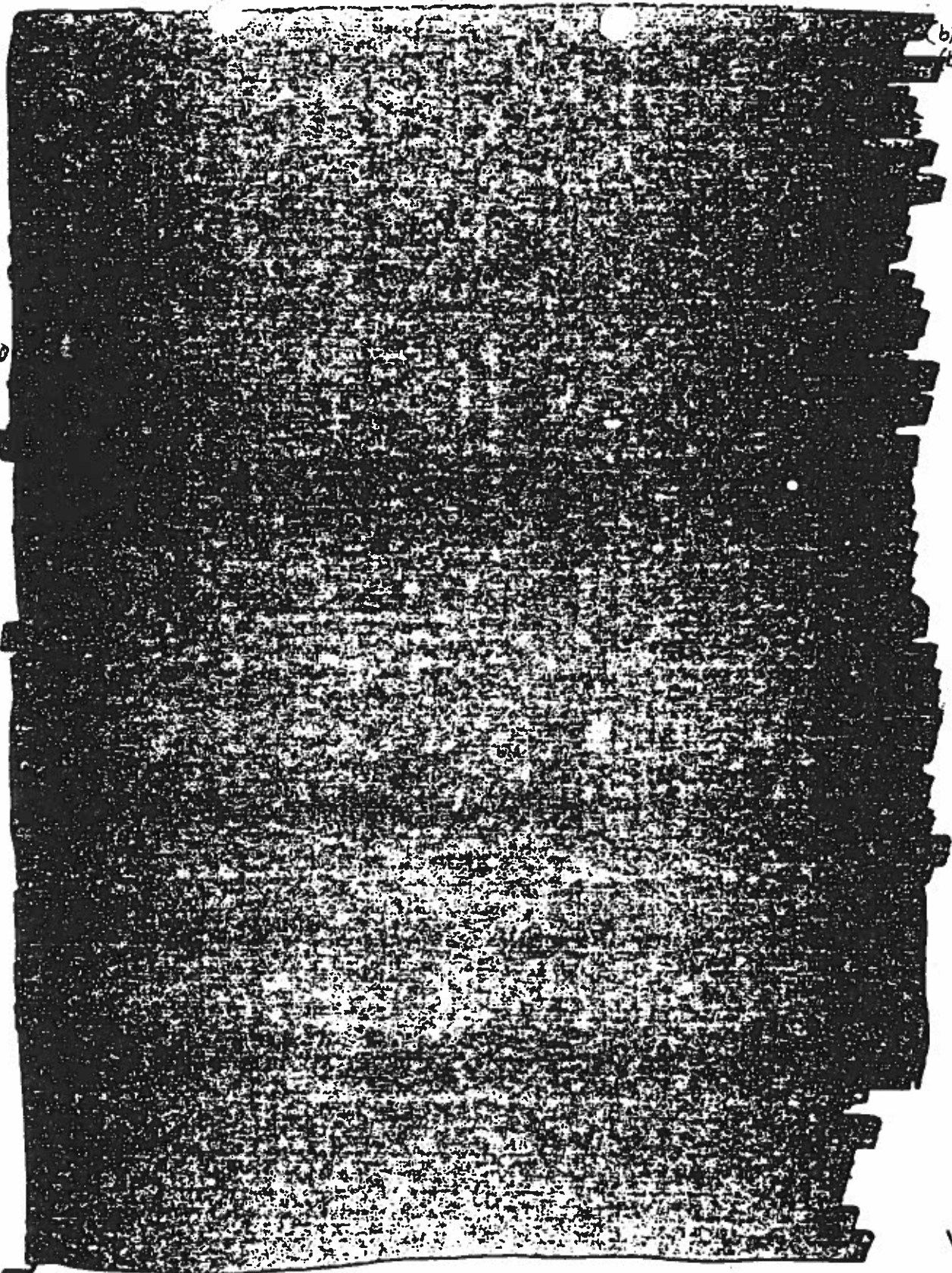


FIGURE E-5

E-21

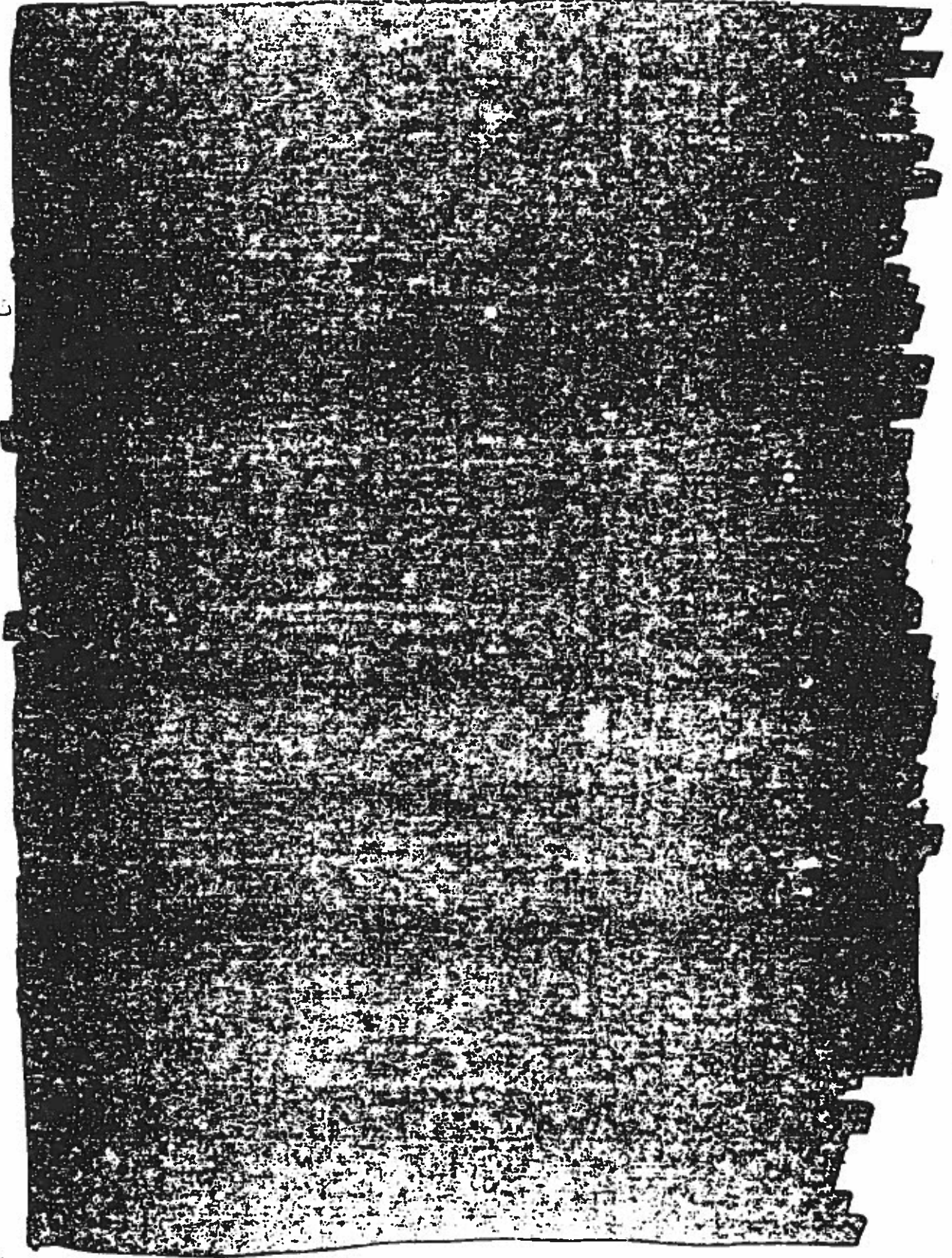
~~SECRET~~

(b)(1)(a)(1)
(b)(1)(a)(2)

(b)(5)

1-65
1-66

plans
system
operations
instructions
manuals



E-22

~~SECRET~~

(b) (1) (c) (1)
(b) (1) (a) (2)
(b) (5)

1-65
1-66

system
specialties
system
immunities

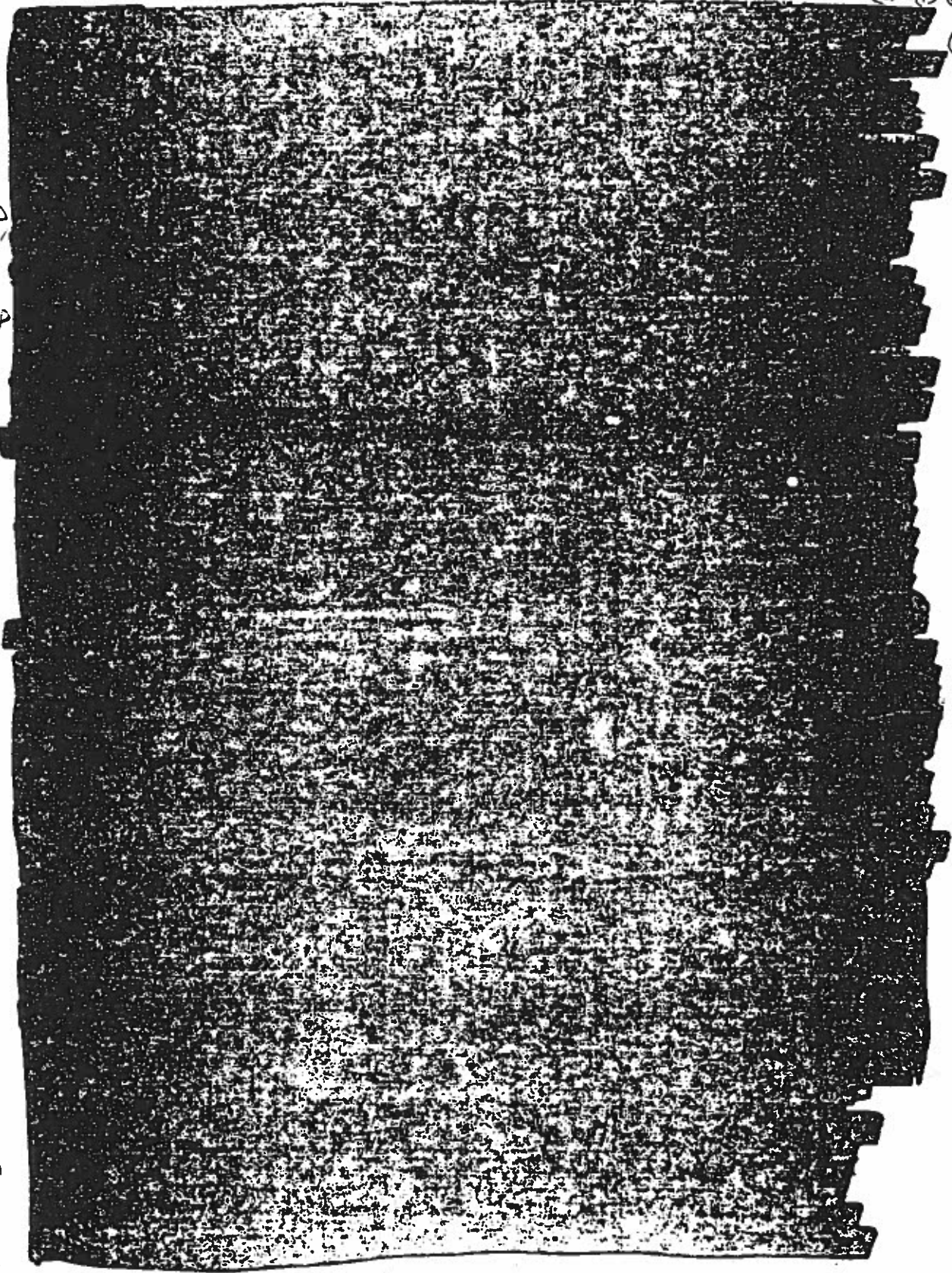


FIGURE E-7

E-23

~~SECRET~~

(b)(1)(a)(1)
(b)(1)(a)
(b)(1)(c)

1-65
1-66
plans,
systems
capabilities,
systems
communications

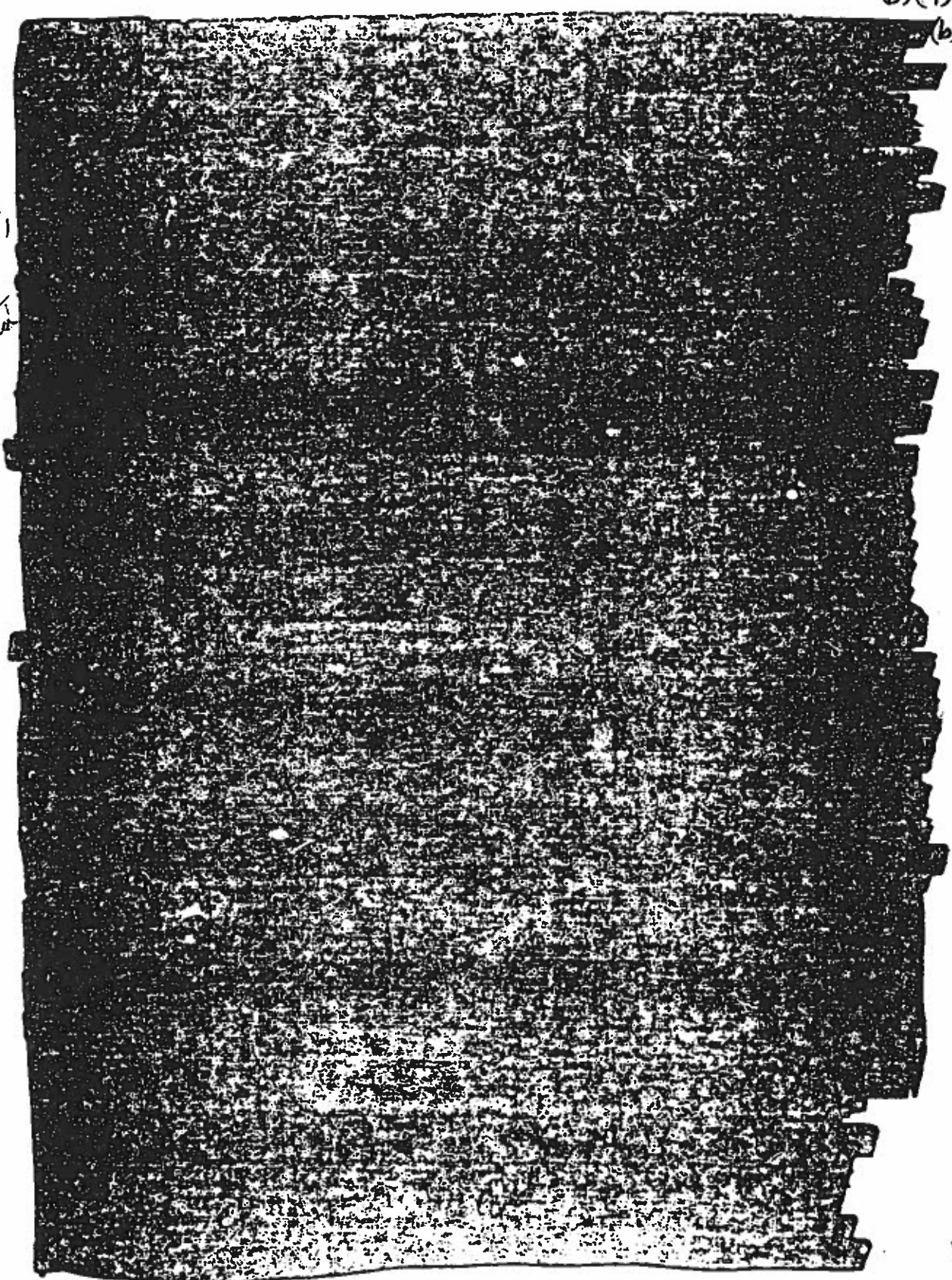


FIGURE E-8

E-24

1-65
1-66

plans
systems
systems
characteristics

(b)(1)(a)(1)
(b)(1)(a)(2)
(b)(5)

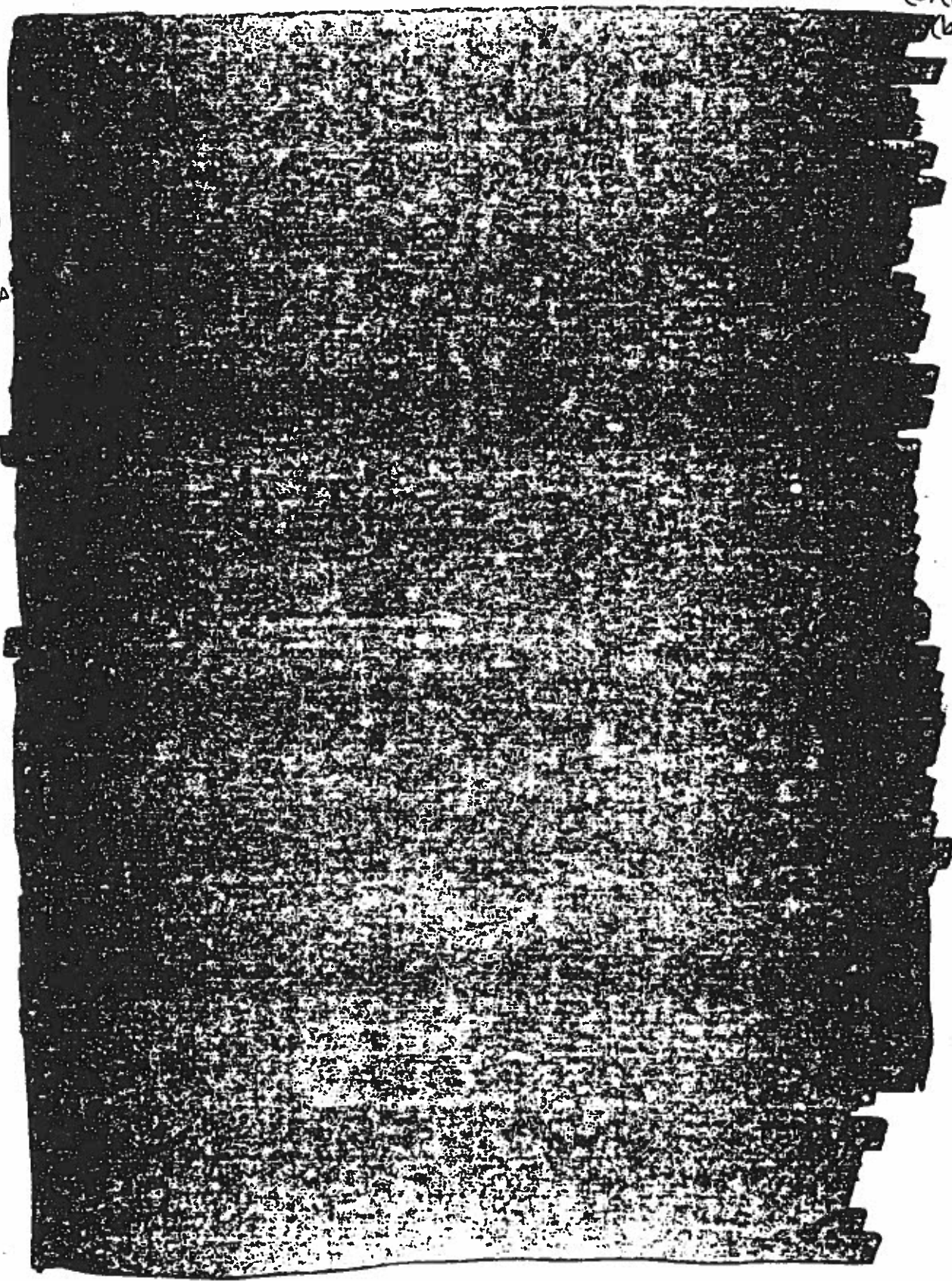


FIGURE E-9

E-25

~~SECRET~~

(b)(1)(a)(1)
(b)(1)(a)(2)

1-65

*plan
capabilities,
and
equipment*

[REDACTED]



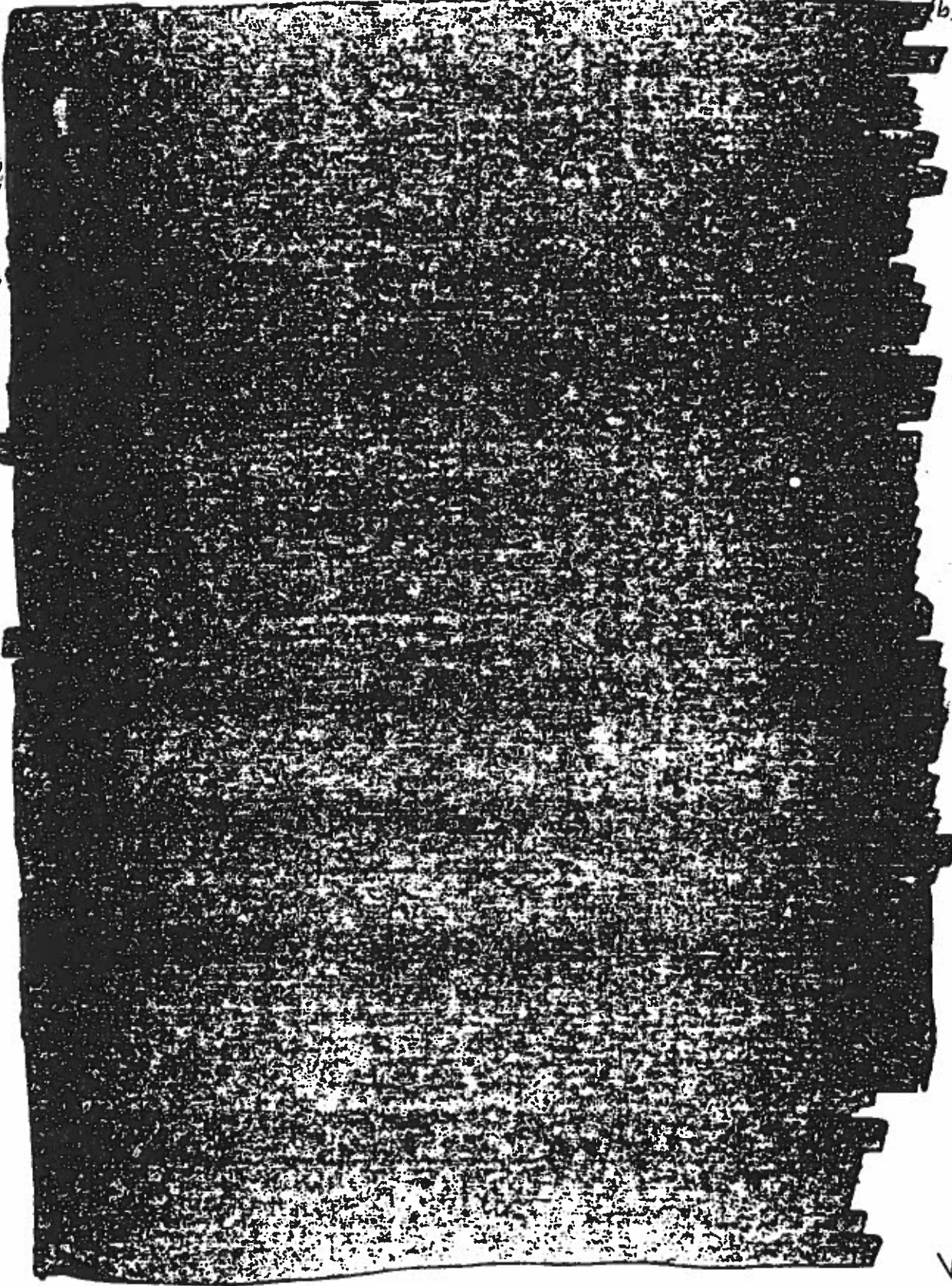
a. (U) Training objectives for JTF helo det were determined to be:

- (1) (U) Mission planning/execution.
- (2) (U) Update of intelligence data.
- (3) (U) Augmented navigation systems.
 - (1) PINS.
 - (2) Omega.
- (4) (U) Maximize proficiency on NVG utilization.
- (5) (U) Maximize proficiency on low level night navigation.

(b)(1)(a)(i)
(b)(1)(a)(i)

1-65

plans,
plans
and
operations



1-65

*Plans,
plans
activities,
and*

(b)(1)(a)(1)
(b)(1)(a)(2)

[REDACTED]



b. (U) Aircrews were trained to a satisfactory minimum standard - when all crews met that standard, then the standard was raised. This training period was designed to raise the standard.

c. (U) The specific objectives were devoted to the following areas:

- (1) (U) Section landings at remote sites.
- (2) (U) Augmented nav system refresher.
- (3) (U) Extended flight profile.
- (4) (U) Map interpretation and terrain analysis.

1-65

Handwritten:
1-65
unit capabilities,
personnel activities

[Large redacted area consisting of approximately 15 horizontal black bars of varying lengths covering the majority of the page's content.]

(b)(1)(a)(1)
(b)(1)(a)(2)



1-65
plans,
plan needs
capabilities

(b)(1)(a)(1)
(b)(1)(a)(2)

[REDACTED]

b. (U) Emphasis upon training objectives focused toward a wider area of tactical training to include the following areas.

- (1) (U) Terrain flight (TERF) techniques (Day VFR).
- (2) (U) TERF Navigation (Day VFR).

[REDACTED]

(4) (U) Qualify all aircrews in inflight air refueling.

(5) (U) Remain proficient in NVG/night navigation techniques.

[REDACTED]

(b)(1)(a)(1)
(b)(1)(a)

1-65

plan
with
capabilities

[REDACTED]

a. ~~840~~ Training emphasis was focused upon improving pilots' tactical skills encompassing all possible problems/ situation which might arise. Training was conducted during daylight hours and involved the following areas of instruction.

- (1) (U) Day TERF trng.
- (2) (U) In-flight aerial refueling day/night (all crews).

[REDACTED]

(b)(1)(a)(1)
(b)(1)(a)(2)

1-65

June
plan
and capabilities
with
operations

[REDACTED]

a. (U) Training objectives were designed to increase mission potential for the helo det. Ground training was conducted to enhance already established proficiency levels and skills.

[REDACTED]

1-65

*Jan
Jan
rehabilitation
unit capabilities*

[REDACTED]

(b)(1)(a)(1)
(b)(1)(a)(2)

d. (U) The following items were flt objectives for final training.

- (1) (U) Night navigation/NVG utilization.
- (2) (U) Augment nav system utilization.
- (3) (U) NVG formation review/remote landings.

[REDACTED]

ANNEX F

GLOSSARY

(b)(1)(a)(1)
(b)(1)(a)(2)

1-67

plans,
and
activities

[REDACTED]

A/C aircraft

[REDACTED]

AFB Air Force Base

AF/SA Air Force Studies and Analysis Division

AGL above ground level

AM amplitude modulation

[REDACTED]

Assigned Forces Forces in being which have been placed under the operational command or operational control of a commander

AWS Air Weather Service (US Air Force)

BIM Blade Inspection Method

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

C3 command, control, and communications

[REDACTED]

C-130 Lockheed HERCULES cargo/transport aircraft

[REDACTED]


CAS Crisis Action System

CCT Combat Control Team

CEOI Communications-Electronics Operating Instruction

CH-46 Boeing-Vertol SEA KNIGHT assault helicopter

[REDACTED]

CH-47	Boeing-Vertol CHINOOK passenger/cargo helicopter (US Army)
CH-53	H-53 assault helicopter equipped primarily for movement of cargo/personnel (US Marine Corps)
CIA	Central Intelligence Agency
CINC	commander of unified or specified command
CINCAD	Commander in Chief, Aerospace Defense Command
CINCLANT	Commander in Chief, Atlantic
CINCMAC	Commander in Chief, Military Airlift Command
CINCPAC	Commander in Chief, Pacific
CINCSAC	Commander in Chief, Strategic Air Command
CJCS	Chairman, Joint Chiefs of Staff
COMCTJTF	Commander, Counterterrorist Joint Task Force
COMBAT TALON	MC-130 aircraft
COMJTF	Commander, Joint Task Force
COMNAVAIRLANT	Commander, Naval Air Forces, Atlantic Fleet
COMSEC	communications security
CONPLAN	operation plan in concept format
CONUS	continental United States
CT	counterterrorist
CTJTF	Counterterrorist Joint Task Force
DCI	Director of Central Intelligence
	
DIA	Defense Intelligence Agency
DMMH/FH	direct maintenance man-hours/flight-hour
DNA	Defense Nuclear Agency
DOD	Department of Defense

-67
lans

(b)(1)(a)(1)

28 July 1

DR

dead reckoning

(b)(1)(a)(1)
(b)(1)(a)(2)

[REDACTED]

EVM

evasive maneuvering

EW

electronic warfare

FAA

Federal Aviation Agency

[REDACTED]

FLIR

forward-looking infrared

FM

frequency modulation

H-3

Sikorsky SEA KING helicopter

H-53

Sikorsky SEA STALLION heavy-lift helicopter

[REDACTED]

HLZ

helicopter landing zone

HF

high frequency

HH-3

H-3 search and rescue helicopter

HH-53

H-53 search and rescue helicopter (US Air Force)

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

IMC

instrument meteorological conditions

INS

Inertial Navigation System

IR

infrared

ITF

Intelligence Task Force

J-2

Intelligence Directorate

[REDACTED]

1-67
Plans
Operations
with
operations



J-3 Operations Directorate
 JCS Joint Chiefs of Staff
 Joint Task Force A force composed of assigned or attached elements of two or more Services, which is constituted and so designated by the Secretary of Defense
 JSCP Joint Strategic Capabilities Plan
 JTF Joint Task Force

KT(S) knot(s)

(b)(1)(a)(1)

1-67

Plans

[REDACTED]

MC mission capable
 MC-130 C-130 aircraft modified for Special Operations Forces missions (COMBAT TALON)
 MCAS Marine Corps Air Station
 MHZ megahertz
 NARF Naval Air Rework Facility
 NAS Naval Air Station
 NCA National Command Authorities
 nm nautical miles
 NMCC National Military Command Center
 NMCM not mission capable--maintenance
 NMCS not mission capable--supply

[REDACTED]

NVG night-vision goggle
 OJC Organization of the Joint Chiefs of Staff
 O&M Operation and Maintenance

**Operational
Command**

Those functions of command involving the composition of subordinate forces, the assignment of tasks, the designation of objectives, and the authoritative direction necessary to accomplish the mission. Operational command should be exercised by the use of the assigned normal organizational units through their responsible commanders or through the commanders of subordinate forces established by the commander exercising operational command. It does not include such matters as administration, discipline, internal organization, and unit training, except when a subordinate commander requests assistance. (The term is synonymous with "operational control" and is uniquely applied to the operational control exercised by the commanders of unified and specified commands over assigned forces in accordance with the National Security Act of 1947, as amended and revised (10.U.S.C. 124)).

OPSEC

operations security

(b)(1)(a)
(b)(1)(a)

1-67

[REDACTED]

Handwritten notes:
Sum
with
mobility

PINS

Palletized Inertial Navigation System

RAM

reliability, availability, and maintainability

RH-53

H-53 airborne mine countermeasures helicopter
(US Navy)

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

SAR search and rescue

(b)(1)(a)(1)

(b)(1)(a)(2)

1-67

slaves
use of
practices

SEA STALLION US Navy H-53 helicopter

SEAL sea/air/land unit (US Navy)

SIGINT signals intelligence

SIGSEC signals security

SOF Special Operations Forces

SOP standing operating procedure(s)

[REDACTED]

Support The action of a force which aids, protects, complements, or sustains another force in accordance with a directive requiring such action

TAC Tactical Air Command

TACAN tactical air navigation system

TALON COMBAT TALON

Task Force (1) A temporary grouping of units under one commander, formed for the purpose of carrying out a specific operation or mission; (2) a semipermanent organization of units under one commander for the purpose of carrying out a continuing specific task

TERF terrain flight

TFR terrain-following radar

T/O takeoff

**NATIONAL
SECURITY
ARCHIVE**

This document is from the holdings of:

The National Security Archive

Suite 701, Gelman Library, The George Washington University

2130 H Street, NW, Washington, D.C., 20037

Phone: 202/994-7000, Fax: 202/994-7005, nsarchiv@gwu.edu