

Highlights from the NCMF 20th General Membership Meeting & Annual Symposium

Wednesday, 17 October 2018
JHU/APL Kossiakoff Center

NCMF Update

Mr. Richard C. Schaeffer, Jr., NCMF President and Chairman of the Board

Mr. Schaeffer welcomed about 115 members to the annual meeting reporting that the current NCMF membership is at 905. He solicited the membership for blog articles to be posted on the Foundation's website that is being redesigned by Cindi Saadi, and that once complete, will also be fully responsive to all viewing devices. This year's lecture series has been very successful, most especially the March program featuring Liza Mundy, author of "The Code Girls." He reported that the Foundation donated a WJ8692 receiver to the Museum. And once again, the Crypto Cup Golf Tournament sponsored by Eagle Alliance was the largest fundraising event (\$46,000). Finally, Dick paid tribute to Gene Becker who passed away in June. He identified Gene as the "consummate President and supporter" of the Foundation.

National Cryptologic Museum Update

Mr. Patrick Weadon, Curator and Mr. Larry Castro, CCEI Chief Operating Officer

Mr. Weadon opened his remarks stating that the success enjoyed by the museum would not be possible without the support of the NCMF. He also recognized the contribution of the large number of volunteers who serve as docents and receptionists. All contribute to the museum's Trip Advisor 4.6 rating and identification as the 17th most popular attraction in the Baltimore area. Patrick then reviewed the events taking place to celebrate the museum's 25th anniversary, the next public event, "Space Codes" being held on 15 November at NCM.

Mr. Castro's presentation highlighted a number of achievements this past year. The foundation is about to sign a formal partnership agreement with NSA's College of Cyber. The annual symposium co-sponsored with the University of MD, "Attacking the Roots of Cyber (IN)Security: The Role of Education" will be held on 8 November. The museum governance MOU between NCMF and NSA is in its final draft. The site, facility and exhibit designs and implementation are nearly complete including newly acquired aircraft for Vigilance Park. Larry reported the financial status as of 30 September. At \$33.3M the foundation still needs \$19.7M funding to complete the new museum and cyber center. Finally, he appealed to the membership for volunteers to support various activities. As the NCMF opens its public campaign there is an urgent need to build a database for mass mailings. In follow-up, Mr. Schaeffer emphasized the need for about 25,000 names.

Video Clip

The audience enjoyed a short video clip of Walter Cronkite reporting his assessment of the unwinnable Vietnam War.

Keynote Speaker

Dr. Thomas Johnson, historian and author of “The History of NSA”

Dr. Johnson delivered an address outlining NSA support to the Vietnam conflict highlighting that airborne DF was the principal intelligence source during the war. He stated that NSA’s effort was set up to be a strategic asset in the region but over time developed and delivered important tactical support to US forces. SIGINT wasn’t well understood by its consumers thus creating the need to educate those in the field as to its value. Dr. Johnson highlighted the evacuation of cryptologists from South Vietnam after it fell to the North noting that the last American SIGINT-er left on 16 April 1975; unfortunately only a few South Vietnamese cryptologists (trained by the US) were safely evacuated.

CIA Panel: “CIA Operations and Analysis in SE Asia”

Dr. David Robarge, CIA Chief Historian, Mr. Randy Burkett, CIA Staff Historian, and Dr. Clayton Laurie, CIA Staff Historian

Dr. Robarge opened the CIA discussion with a review of six declassified histories of CIA’s engagement in Vietnam. These histories covered a long period beginning with political action in 1954. He discussed in detail several CIA programs - some enjoyed limited local success (e.g. the pacification programs in the South); some failing (e.g. infiltration into the North); and some very effective, in particular the deployment of a new supersonic reconnaissance aircraft, the A12.

Mr. Burkett’s presentation compared various aspects of the war in Vietnam to the modern day war in Afghanistan. The US was drawn into Vietnam for political reasons but three terrorist attacks (culminating with 9-11) drew us into an undeclared war with Afghanistan. He compared Dinh Diem to Karzai; the availability of cross-border safe havens in both conflicts; the enemy’s determination to “fight to the end;” the decade long conflicts; and an elusive concept of winning. He pointed out successes and failures in each conflict but ultimately, he concluded, that the US public opposition to the war in Vietnam vice the relative “invisibility” of the Afghan war to the populace as effecting the US engagement.

In closing, Dr. Laurie continued the comparison of these two wars pointing out that supporting our involvement in Vietnam was a secondary mission as the intelligence community was focused on the USSR and China during 1954-1975. However, since 9-11 counterterrorism has been a large portion of CIA’s mission thus a greater emphasis on Afghanistan.

NSA East Campus Updated

Mr. Tim Bittinger, NSA I&L

During lunch, Mr. Bittinger shared the plans and status of the new NSA East Campus under construction. Interesting to note is that the buildings and roads are named for important people and achievements in NSA's history. For example, the (Dorothy) Blum Center has just opened and Sigaba Way is a major roadway.

The Codetappers: Vietnam POW Communications: Inside & Outside

Greg Nedved, NSA CCH historian

Mr. Nedved described the code tapping system used by prisoners of war to communicate among themselves in the Vietnam prisons known as the Zoo, Alcatraz and the Hanoi Hilton. He also shared examples of successful communication to the external world. These included James Stockdale's (the senior naval officer held captive for seven years) correspondence with his wife. In one letter he covertly revealed the names of other Americans being held.

NSA Panel: SIGINT support to the Vietnam War

Dr. David Hatch, NSA Historian & Technical Director, Center for Cryptologic History (CCH), Mr. Greg Nedved, NSA CCH Historian, Mr. Thomas Fogarty, NSA Retired, Mr. Jack Barrett, NSA Declassification Center Staff, and Mr. Cassian (Cash) O'Rourke, NSA Declassification Center Staff

Mr. Nedved presented an overview, "The TET Offensive characterized by its Audacity, Timing and Magnitude." He drew the conclusion that the TET Offensive was a military victory but yet a political defeat for the US.

Mr. Fogarty's presentation "Report More Reports" focused on NSA's reporting mission and his experience both at NSA headquarters and in the field as the Senior NSA representative.

Mr. Barrett's "Experience at MACV (Military Assistance Command Vietnam)" presented a detailed description of his in-country experience in supporting the J2. He was one of 16-18 SSG (SIGINT Support Group) and provided 24-hour support to the J2 during the TET offensive.

Finally, Mr. O'Rourke described his six-week QRC deployment to Udorn Air Base during the TET offensive.

In each of these presentations, the audience realized the importance of SIGINT to the military forces provided in part through the personal dedication and professional expertise of these NSA personnel.