

**Police Advising in Vietnam**  
**Recorded 16 Oct 2015**  
**Interview Questions and Answers Transcribed**  
**Annotated version with verbal additions (paraphrased) added on 1 Nov 2015**  
**Transcription completed 4 Nov 2015**

Introduction:

MAJ Nguyen: Hello my name is MAJ Phu Nguyen and I'll be interviewing Col Nguyen today. Go ahead and introduce yourself.

[Translation]

Col Nguyen: My name is Charles Nguyen Tan Cuong

MAJ Nguyen: That's it, then we'll go on and start out...

<b>I. AID EXPERIENCE</b>
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1. MAJ Nguyen: Please tell me about your US AID experience, comparing your experiences (both positive and negative) with your US military, US CIA, and USAID advisors. What were your relationships like with each?

Col Nguyen: Friendly. During my successive function, I found it positive, I don't have any problem with my advisors. I am lucky because all of my advisors get along with me. I don't know, elsewhere maybe have a difference with advisor, but for me none, no differences.

- a. 1:45. MAJ Nguyen: Were the US advisors familiar with the Vietnamese culture?

[Translation]

Col Nguyen: All of my advisors working with me, they have some experience with Vietnamese culture, and they get along with our culture. I don't know maybe they have experience before coming to my office.

2. 2:47. MAJ Nguyen: So, what was logistical support like?

[Translation, pause]

Col Nguyen: All of the majority of the logistical support, they gave me, they are fine. Useful, but some are not adequate with the conflict in Vietnam.

- a. 3:33. MAJ Nguyen: Were material things culturally centric? (That is, did the foreign advisors send material things that could be used only in their home countries or things that were easily adaptable to Vietnamese policing?)

[Translation]

Col Nguyen: Almost, the equipment they give us was very useful like trucks and jeeps, but I feel not adequate for the conflict in Vietnam. Like you know they gave us Harley Davidson motorcycles a very beautiful motorcycle, but we can't use them in Vietnam because they cannot circulate in the narrow streets, you know, where we have to pursue the terrorist in the village, you know the small village, they can use only in the big city but not in the village.

- b. 5:23. MAJ Nguyen: For example, what kinds of equipment were in use by Vietnamese police?

[Translation]

Col Nguyen: Like Mr Clark [USAIC Liaison] he ... had nice ... giving us two fire trucks which were very useful in the big city like Saigon or Nha Trang.

Lt Col (Ret) Bouchat: May I ask? Why fire trucks?

Mrs Chung [wife and translator]: We don't have any.

Lt Col (Ret) Bouchat: Why police department with the fire trucks, why not the fire department?

Mrs Chung: We don't have a fire department there.

MAJ Nguyen: Just EMS services there?

Col Nguyen: That is why I am the first police officer to have a fire truck

Lt Col (Ret ) Bouchat: Where? Nha Trang?

Col Nguyen: In Nha Trang City, big city.

Col Nguyen later added: Earlier in Nha Trang we had no fire trucks. In case of a fire we had to use fire trucks from the airfield, and we didn't want to ask the Air Force for help. We wanted to help the people, and have the police make a good impression on the people.

c. 6:59. MAJ Nguyen. How much influence did Mr. Clark, the American police advisor, have on you and your department? Could you describe his influence?

Col Nguyen: Mr Clark he not only my advisor he is my friend. Because he get involved in the activity in my headquarters.

Col Nguyen later added: Mr Clark was more than a liaison because he volunteered beyond his assigned duties. That is why I called him a friend.

3. 7:34. MAJ Nguyen: Did you agree or disagree with these changes recommended by foreign police advising? Describe why or why not.

[Translation]

Col Nguyen: Sometimes we have light, light disagreement, but we talk to each other and we can, you know, we can set aside our disagreements.

Col Nguyen later added: Sometimes we disagreed. For instance, some advisors said to keep the "good" [newer more reliable] jeeps in the city. I wanted them to go to the remote police stations because they were near the mountains. The remote stations needed the good jeeps because there was no place to repair them out there.

4. 8:21. MAJ Nguyen: Overall, how did the police of Vietnam feel about these other foreign police agencies coming in and advising them?

Mrs Chung: Which one [question]?

MAJ Nguyen: Question five [renumbered to four during editing].

Col Nguyen: Well, we are very thankful to America for helping us to fight communism and to fight the terrorists, and we try to use the teachings in the best way with their advice.

Col Nguyen later added: We worked in strategic cooperation. If they [the advisors] had had a good reason, I will follow their advice.

## II. POLICE ADMINISTRATION AND LEADERSHIP

### Management style and leadership strategies

1. 9:16. MAJ Nguyen: Great, thinking about your police management style and leadership strategy, did your experiences over time change the way you approached your management role and how so?

[Long pause]

Col Nguyen: In the conflict in Vietnam, you know, because the use of the tactics or the use of the strategy so we have some type of change, slightly, but in general the tactics under my command remain the same. I think I was successful because during my leadership no act of terrorist happen under my territory.

Col Nguyen later added: Tactics changed according to whether we used them in the city or remote police stations. In remote stations we can use very strong tactics, but in the city we had to be more diplomatic. Under my control tactics worked well. We were able to keep the roads clear [ie no land mines building into something like the improvised explosive devices (IED) crisis of US forces in Iraq].

a.: Did your management and leadership strategies change as a result of any of your advising experiences? How so? [question not asked]

b. 11:08. MAJ Nguyen Did your management and leadership strategies change during times of conflict? How so?

[Translate]

Col Nguyen: Sometime we have to change the strategy a little bit according to the terrorist's territory, like Saigon City and Nha Trang city between the two cities we have a difference because in Saigon City we have to use politics and more diplomacy.

2. 12:15. MAJ Nguyen: About how many officers did you have under your command, and what was the rank structure and major duties in your various leadership positions?

[Translation]

Col Nguyen: You know during my position as police commander in Region Three comprising 12 provinces, 12 provinces, [pauses to write and calculate, translation].

Col Nguyen: During my command as police commander in Region Three

MAJ Nguyen: In region three there are 12 provinces.

Col Nguyen: In Region Three comprised of about 12 provinces. And in each province we have a police chief .[translation]

Mrs Nguyen: plus the main office headquarters of the Region Three.

Col Nguyen: We have about 180.

Lt Col (Ret) Bouchat: In Region Three?

Mrs Chung: The whole region including the HQ of the region.

MAJ Nguyen: There are only 180 officers in the entire region?

Mrs Chung: Yeah, 12 provinces plus the Headquarters itself. Headquarters of the Region Three.

MAJ Nguyen: So roughly each province had only about 10 or 12 officers on average? [repeated]

Mrs Chung: It depends on the size of the province. He said...

Col Nguyen: Because in the 15.[unknown] provinces You have big province and small province, with the big province we have deputies, more policemen, and more officers. But the opposite, I have almost 150 officers in the whole region. [note 30 officers were in the headquarters.]

[Translation] 150

Col Nguyen: 150, and the policemen we have is only 17,000 policeman, for the whole region.

Mrs Chung: Vietnam is divided by 4 corps plus Saigon. Four corps. Corps One is Region One, Region Two, Region Three, Region Four, and Saigon

Col Nguyen: But the region under my command was the most important because it was closest to Saigon.

Lt Col (Ret) Bouchat: Which regions was that?

Mrs Chung: Three.

Lt Col (Ret) Bouchat: Region Three, that's right. What type of police was this? Special police or local police?

Col Nguyen: We have two kind of police: uniformed police, you know use for the traffic, and you have special police, no uniform. I command all of this. But, Region Three is the most important because it is closest to Saigon. All of the coup d'état comes from the Region Three.

MAJ Nguyen: I just want to clarify something because it seems to me that a region that big plus a major city, how can you only have a 150 officers? Can you confirm that it was only a 150 officers in the entire region.

Col Nguyen: The entire region, yes.

MAJ Nguyen: It just seems to me that it seems like such a small number to me.

Lt Col (Ret) Bouchat: Because if there are 17,000 in the whole country...

Mrs Chung: Quarter. Region, in the region not the country.

Col Nguyen: 17,000 in the whole region....then who were the 150?

Mrs Chung: Officers.

MAJ Nguyen: So there is a distinction between the leadership officers and the police officers.

Lt Col (Ret) Bouchat: Because he is doing it differently. These questions are based on sergeants and officers below them, so he said 150 officers and 17,000 police. [Note: Col Nguyen is using the term officer like the US military does as a commissioned officer, not as US police do as a police officer.]

Col Nguyen: So don't forget you have the police field office. Police field force came by with [work with?] the American Rangers. Police field force. I have a major who commands my police field force. An American major from the Ranger force.

Lt Col (Ret) Bouchat: Was he your advisor?

Col Nguyen. Yes he was my advisor., a major. I have two battalions of police field force. A battalion comprised about 200 police field force. It means I command police field force, uniform police, and special branch [undercover] police persons.

Col Nguyen later added: Each province had a police chief, a deputy chief for judiciary inspection and a deputy chief for special police who were in charge of the anti-terrorist mission. The whole region had 180-200 officers [note: Col Nguyen is intentionally correcting his previous numbers]. I needed more officers but there was not money, but we did recruit some more with American help. Everywhere we were understaffed. The whole Region 3 had 18-20,000 police [another correction].

Col Nguyen also later added: The Vietnamese police force was not like an American police force, it was more like the Army. Police are not elected in Vietnam [comparing to county sheriffs in the US who are elected], and they are meant to counter coup d'états. For the special police, the police could recruit from the Vietnamese Ranger school. We could take recruits right out of the Ranger regiment, train them for three months for anti-terrorist and anti-demonstration activities in the police school. We used these forces for the coup de main, quick operations to capture someone and pull out.

3. 21:16. MAJ Nguyen: In the US, there were various eras of policing. One of the earliest was the "political era", where police jobs were tied to local politics. Sergeants had little control over police officers who were politically connected and were unable to discipline those officers. In fact, the jobs of officers who were not tied to the political party in power were not guaranteed. Did you experience this at any time during your career?

[Translation]

Col Nguyen: Because I am, you know, I am my own [translation] thinking, I don't want that. I did not belong to any political party, because I think I work for the country, not for someone. That is why I am not that.

Mrs Chung: He is like that. I know, I know him.

Col Nguyen: I work for the country not for a leader, because the leader can change all of the time.

Col Nguyen later added this story: In 1971 *US News and World Report* printed a story about the police in Siagon. They watched a simulated terrorist attack on a building, and its recapture by police field forces. The article concluded that the police were firmly in control of the city.

- 23:07 MAJ Nguyen: How deep were political ties from within the Vietnam government to the officers that were under you?

[Translation]

Col Nguyen: I don't have any [translation] influence by any political party. I am neutral, I am not influenced by any political party.

MAJ Nguyen: What about the officers that worked underneath you?

Mrs Chung: Yeah they had to, they had to. The police is mostly neutral but the top changed. The top changed, we have to obey.

Col Nguyen: You know sometimes that is why I sometimes think that I had a reason. I see my colleagues, they come up quicker than me but because they follow the military coup. But six months after they are in a jail. But you know, I come up a little bit slow, but I am....

Mrs Chung: stable. He was stable that way, not quick.

- 25:13 MAJ Nguyen: Was there a time you had to watch how you treated a fellow police officer not just out of respect, but because of who they were associated with?

Col Nguyen: Yeah sometimes [translation]. Because I am neutral, they know, all of my officers under my command, they know I am neutral. If sometime I have a little difficulty with certain officer, but you know because I am right, I did right. I could get rid of the officer with time, with time. Even with my chief [of police in provinces] I can get rid of my chief, I think it all comes from good.

Mrs Chung: Sometimes he argued with the chief of province, because of his you know...

Col Nguyen: but they make a decision they shouldn't. But my chief he takes my side, he takes my side [unintelligible] a general, a general because I did right, I am safe.

Col Nguyen later added: I am not a member of a political party, so I am not influenced by officer's under my control. If one of my officers commits an affront, I will take control and fix is subtly. I cannot say outright no. If it is severe, I can put an officer under house arrest first, and if he repeats I can turn him over to the tribunal and try him. If there is a conflict between me and a governor, the central government would take my side.

4. 27:10. MAJ Nguyen. Approximately 15% of the Vietnamese police force today is comprised of women police. Were women allowed to become police officers during your time or were they always part of the force?

[Translation]

Col Nguyen: In my position you know, in my policemen under my command we use women, but they are not in uniform. They take information, they go to the [crime] scene and take information for me.

Mrs Chung: After, right before two years before we left Vietnam [1973], there are a big department, a technical department.

Col Nguyen: Before we get in lifeboat in Vietnam, when we...before we get out of Vietnam in a lifeboat [referring to the family's escape in a barge down the Saigon River in a barge in 1975], I was director of the technical department. I control the whole police in the whole Viet Nam.

Mrs Chung: [He controls all of the police] Technical Services.

Col Nguyen: I control the Vietnam archives, identification cards, prisons, laboratories, technical labs, and I control, I inspect the whole prisons. Vietnam police, I have to control the whole Vietnam prisons, police prisons.

Mrs Chung: He was in charge of one of the five most important Directors of Vietnam. He for his compound he had 2600 personnel, in Saigon City, in Saigon only. Each province has its own department.

Col Nguyen: We had 52, [translation] 52 provinces in Vietnam. South Vietnam comprised of 52 provinces.

Mrs Chung: In Saigon, in his compound, technical compound only, he had 500 women technicians. 500!

Col Nguyen: They would send [them] for photos, send for finger prints, because 500 girls come to the United States to train for the fingerprints. I don't have no good time with them before with the girls, they have a good time with me because too many groups

Mrs Chung: 500 female employees under him, in that compound only.

Lt Col (Ret) Bouchat: Did they do the job?

Mrs Chung: Oh yeah!

Col Nguyen: Trained by American training in the United States.

MAJ Nguyen: They were technicians.

Mrs Chung: They take pictures and this and that [translation].

Col Nguyen: Because I was in the laboratory, my laboratory department when have someone die, especially in the days of assassination, they have to bring the finger prints and study the blood and everything. It is laboratory...

Mrs Chung: What do you call here?

MAJ Nguyen: Medical Examiner.

Col Nguyen: Medical Examiner! {translation] and taken the study of people and everything and during...

Col Nguyen later added: We don't use the women police in a fight, they are trained to collect information undercover, like a taxi driver. We had to train them and then debrief them in order to get information.

- o MAJ Nguyen: If we can get back to the women police, were these considered police officers – I know they had a different job than the male police – were they considered police officers, and was their training the same?

Col Nguyen: [translation] The chief of the laboratory, a major, was a pharmacist trained here [United States].

MAJ Nguyen: You said the chief of the laboratory?

Col Nguyen: He told was a pharmacist trained here [translation]. I told you when I was Commander of Region Three I had many girls in the special police

Mrs Chung: Female police, called Swan, S-W-A-N, we called them Swans.

Col Nguyen: We had a very strong presence they collect up information.

Mrs Chung: Special agents.

Col Nguyen: They work in the dancing club, as taxi girl...

Mrs Chung : bar girl ,undercover, stuff you know...

Col Nguyen: They collect information...

Mrs Nguyen: They are very talented, beautiful...

Col Nguyen later added: Women trained in the United States to take fingerprints and identify serial crime. Some women used this in the labs, sometimes to analyze signatures and look for forgeries.

- What were the roles of women police? Did they have the same responsibilities as the men? Or, are they responsible for certain tasks (like searching/supervising women criminals and delinquent children, or responding to certain crimes targeting women)? [Question not asked]

- 35:50 MAJ Nguyen: So, based on your experiences, what are your thoughts on women police officers? Can they do the job the same as men? In what ways do they work differently than male police officers? I think you've already answered that...

Col Nguyen: [translation] I think the women police in Vietnam they work generally in the special branch, yeah, because deep down I think it is suitable for them. We don't have police women in the police field force. [translation]

Mrs Chung: We don't have females police in the field force.

MAJ Nguyen: They just work in the intel gathering versus the paramilitary...

Lt Col (Ret) Bouchat: ... and in the back office

MAJ Nguyen: We use them especially for the collection of information.

Col Nguyen later added: The women are not trained like here in the United states, they are used in police special branch, not in police uniform but in disguise.

### **Deployment strategies; addressing with crime and war**

1. 37:15. MAJ Nguyen: How did the deployment of your officers change during/after conflict?

[Translation]

Lt Col (Ret) Bouchat: How did you use your police, how did you deploy them, how did you put them in the field, how is that different?

[Translation]

Col Nguyen: Sometimes we have to change in the district, you know, in the province, province comprise many districts, sometime the chief of police of the district doesn't work well, we have to change.

Col Nguyen later added: With so much fighting we have to have 'separate' men who are more active, but are not officers. We needed energetic men, so sometimes used sergeants to replace an officer. Sergeants were not as intelligent as officers, but they were energetic.

2. 38:35. MAJ Nguyen: Within your sectors at various times, you had Australian forces and Korean forces. How did you interact with each of them?

[Translation]

Col Nguyen: When I was in Nha Trang City, I had the cooperation with the brigade of Koreans. The general Korean liked me very much. Yeah.

Mrs Chung: I had three Koreans under my supervision in Nha Trang, because they worked for me as electricians. They went to Cam Rahn Bay to fix the slot machine, pin ball machines, juke machine, they love me, very much.

Col Nguyen: You know the general commander of the Korean brigade, he like me very much. Because Sandra [note" one of Col Nguyen and Mrs Chung's daughters, who was a couple of years old at the time] when she was young she liked quail. You know the Korean they have their headquarters always on the high hills, and no one could not

come there, even the Americans. But the general he likes me and said what do you want, what do you want? And I said I want you to permit to move around your compound so I shoot to the quail for Sandra.

Mrs Chung: ... and they took care of Kimi and Florence [Mrs Chung's daughters approximately eight and ten years old at the time] health, you know, teeth...

Col Nguyen: and Tuany [Mrs Chung's son, Tuan]. [translation] The Korean general invite me to come to his headquarters because the change of command and they give me [translation] a souvenir, and I give the general a police cap and he showed it to me and he ordered his colonel to take me to the Korean PX [translation] and I bought a camera, a big camera. I had a very good relation with the military: American, Korean, and even the Vietnamese.

Bouchat That good relationship, how did that help in policing?

Col Nguyen: The Korean he, you know, he had a *bunker, a communication center built under ground for me* [note: text in italics edited in writing by Col Nguyen on 1 Nov 2015].

Mrs Nguyen: shelter you know because the Viet Cong shells, rockets, so they build a bunker.

Col Nguyen: We have a combined patrol every night. One Vietnamese police officer, one Korean officer, [translation], and one American, Korean combined police.

MAJ Nguyen: So you had a multinational patrol every night. How big were these patrols?

Col Nguyen: We have six jeep patrol with American and Korean because sometime we have [translation] we have fights.

Mrs Chung: fighting over girls, bar girls [note: allied servicemen fighting amongst themselves].

Col Nguyen later added: The Korean general cooperated well with us. They even built a communications center underground which we used when shelled by the communists. If there was too much shelling we go underground. The Koreans were excellent digging underground.

How did you manage deployment of your officers to address crime – was negotiating with foreign forces a consideration? [Question not asked by interviewer]

### **Police academy teaching experience**

1. 44:43. MAJ Nguyen: Could you please tell me about your police academy teaching experience.

[Translation]:

Col Nguyen: When I was director of the technical department, the police academy, every time before I have a promotion, I have to come back and teach them. Every week I teach for two hours about counter-intelligence and interviews, interrogations, especially counter-intelligence

[Translation]

Mrs Chung: He grades...

Col Nguyen: before the close of the course I have to note if [translation] ... after the course I have to note ...

Mrs Chung: ... grading for filing of success.

Bouchat: Did they do practice interrogations, did they do tests? How did you grade them?

Col Nguyen: Because I see we have the questions and I give them case stories, case studies, about the counter-intelligence and not only I grade them, I recite the story not only the good story but the stories in which I failed. They like me because even in the case I fail because I said only will them everything we succeeded but we tell them

sometimes we fail. Why we fail. Something very *simple* make you fail. about why we fail, why we fail. *During missions they should be attentive and careful about their words, their attitude and clothing [uniforms]. Attitude should conform to the role they play.* [note: text in italics added in writing by Col Nguyen on 1 Nov 2015]

Col Nguyen later added: He corrected his original thought to say that when said 'promotion' he meant 'graduation. When I was Director of the Technical Department I would go to the Academy before graduation to grade students' compositions in my field: counter-terrorism, infiltration, and interrogation.

2. 48:30, MAJ Nguyen: Were there any changes in topics taught at the academy or style of training during times of conflict?

[translation, pause]

Col Nguyen: Yeah, sometimes we have to look more at practice than theory. Because usually we work with theory, but I have the practice to look at.

Col Nguyen later added: At graduation I tell the students my case stories [case studies] of our operations, not only successful but also operations that failed. I told them why we failed. That is very important. I also advise the students during their missions to be attentive to their attitude and their clothing. When you disguise as a woman your figure should like a woman. Their attitude should conform to the role they play.

3. In your opinion, what qualities did you feel police trainees needed to possess and/or demonstrate prior to entering the field? [Question not asked by interviewer]

- a. 49:30. MAJ Nguyen: What types of training do you think are necessary in democratic policing? For example, some police departments put cadets through a military boot camp style training. Do you think this type of training is necessary for police in a democratic society?

[Translation]

Col Nguyen: I think we don't have because when I was in function [unsure of work in transcription] we were in war time, we don't have much time to look at theory. We have to train in the job training because we don't have time we don't enough personnel that is why we have to train with on the job training, we don't have time to work in theory.

Col Nguyen later gave an example of thinking like the enemy: If my agent disguises himself as a VC to meet a terrorist he must act like a VC. VC don't smoke store bought cigarettes [implying they rolled their own cigarettes]. If the VC saw you had a pack of store cigarettes he would break contact.

- b. 51:24. MAJ Nguyen: What do you think are the most important skills of police officers? (e.g., communication, tactical/firearms proficiency skills).

[Pause]

Col Nguyen: I have to ask you a question. You said the most important skill of a police officer. It depends. In traffic police or *another role*? [note: text in italics edited in by Col Nguyen on 1 Nov 2015] You know I give an example for you. Like traffic police, when I was transferred to Saigon, political city, the capital, I make an inspection of all of the police, traffic police.

Mrs Chung: ... of all the police officers

Col Nguyen: I take them into my office. I book the young man like... because I think the police are polite. I ask two things: first you should be polite, and be a good man and good uniform, and when you come you should be polite and you should salute first. I ask "would you like to give me your ID?" I don't ask "do you

have an ID!" I ask "would you like to give me your ID?" Always polite. I recommend to you the history [give an example] when I transfer to the capital police from Nha Trang to the police. I was in a civilian car, I didn't take my command yet in Saigon. Tomorrow I will be with the general to take command. But I am in civilian [clothes]. I don't know, I forget and I go through a red light. The police came quick, and I remember and I cross the red light. The police come here, a young police man, a good man, "would you like to give me...you crossed a red light... would you like to give me your driver's license?" I knew him, we are in the same family, my wife's family. He says "you are my chief." And when I take command I make a recommendation, I said to my policemen, traffic police, from today I want all the policemen on traffic police, like the young men, to be polite. You should be polite first, but after if they [civilians] don't obey your order you can use force, but you should be polite. I give you an example. I take the order to the police to permit me, I want you to act like this young man. They arrest me for crossing the red light, but he was polite.

Col Nguyen later added: Traffic police need to look good so they can inspire respect. They should salute and be polite according to the role you play. A young policeman should be vigorous and inspire, but be polite first.

### **Police deviance**

1. 57:15. MAJ Nguyen: Research suggests that government corruption was extensive in Vietnam. Did corruption occur with police? If so, could you describe it? How did you handle this as a police manager?

[Translation, pause]

Col Nguyen: I think it is true, many policemen ... but unfortunately not only police, every branch, not only police, in the Army, not only police, Army but in the active duty, but Army not only police. That is why when I decorate him with the police order, and gave him a medal, I decorate him and I congratulate him ... He said you are our honest man. Because an honest man is very rare in Vietnam.

59:15. MAJ Nguyen: Could you give some examples of police corruption?

[Translation]

Col Nguyen: ... because when I was the Third Region I control the highway and everything, going every vehicle going easy along ... we have check points, many checkpoints, but the reason but the Chinese trucks with plenty of merchandise, goods, especially the Chinese, I remember at the checkpoint the police stop to check the Chinese, the Chinese you know he smile and he hides [in the hand of] the police 20 Vietnamese dollar, you know automatically the Chinese do that. [note while saying this Col Nguyen looked an interviewer in the eye and at the same time smiles and opened the hand of the interviewer, pretended to put something in that hand, and then balled up the fist as if he had transferred some money on the sly.]

Mrs Chung: It is a way of life.

Later Col Nguyen would add: Region 3 had many checkpoints. I recognized that the police take money, especially from the Chinese. The police didn't have good pay. If the Chinese put 20 in the palm, it is difficult for the police to resist. I can put the corrupt policeman in jail, but then his family suffers. I warn them. I transfer them. But the new one who replaces him is the same. It is the power of money. Police take money, but the leaders take millions and buy houses in America while the police go to jail for corruption. That is why I sometimes only warn my police.

2. 1:01:08: MAJ Nguyen: Is there different types of corruption? Did it differ during different types of conflict and if so how? [translation] Did the corruption change over the years?

[Translation]

Col Nguyen: It is difficult I think, difficult to say. That is because of the attitude of the person over the use of money, like the Chinese. Sometime we have anonymous [tips], we can work with *accuse* [note: text in italics edited in by Col Nguyen on 1 Nov 2015] the Chinese. They said no...

Mrs. Chung: They deny it.

Col Nguyen: I say, how can you... because you know many prices [translation] not oblige [translation] because you know the salary is not enough for a family. Like the policemen he lived in my house [guards]. They are very glad when they eat with us because they confess to Maria [Mrs Chung], "in my house I don't have much to eat."

Mrs Chung: You know what, I have to tell you one story. In Vietnam, although we are not rich but we had a guard, a chauffer. and two maids. We divide the meals equally for up front for us and then for the dependents. And one driver, the guard, told me "Ma'am you know that I am very happy to have meals here because at home we don't eat like that, we only eat just vegetables with soy sauce. My salary could only afford to buy rice and besides we have no meat, no meat.

Col Nguyen: And during that, the high ranking, they collect millions and millions of dollars.

Col Nguyen later added: Sometimes I arrest the Chinese to dissuade him not to repeat the offense. I hold him for 20 hours, interrogate him, and make it difficult for the Chinese. If they don't offer a bribe the police would be fine. If a policeman repeats an offense I transfer him to other work.

3. 1:05:25. MAJ Nguyen: Are you familiar with the infamous execution in Saigon (General Nguyen Ngoc Loan executing a Viet Cong Captain)? If so, how did you handle it personally and with your fellow officers?

[translation]

Col Nguyen: I don't support it. I don't support it, I don't support the way Gen Loan executed the *terrorist* [note: text in italics edited in by Col Nguyen on 1 Nov 2015]. He was a political commander. But I don't like it. I said, a friend general or the American general can't do that. The friend general or the American, they don't do that. I say why do you execute because the tribunal can condemn him to death? Why do you have to execute him?

Mrs Nguyen: Well I have to tell you a story about Gen Loan. When we came over here to the States we have annual reunion of the police and one day we had a lottery. I happen to win his [Gen Loan's] watch a very, very expensive watch. And I didn't keep it I gave it back to him. You know against this position I disagree with him [Col Nguyen]. Well, well if that VC kill my friend I am going to execute him, right away, whatever!

Col Nguyen: I say one more thing. Why when I work with a civil president friend, many of my colleagues see executions and assassinations during the really bad VC, and to show he... to show he is anti-communist. I say I don't do that, because when do that you can do assassinate a communist you can do yourself, and you have too many men to help you do it. From this day you are 'otage' [note" using French word for hostage] to your subordinate, because if they do something wrong you can[not] punish them. If you punish them they will get it [and use it against you]. I don't want my subordinate [to do] that, is why you should not do it, any moment [time].

Col Nguyen later added: Killing like that is bad. If there is an offense, transfer him to jail and let the tribunal take care of it.

1:09:25. MAJ Nguyen: Did the execution cause any kind of backlash or gain support with the people?

[Translation]

Col Nguyen: You know I think the majority not like it, the majority of Vietnamese. No [one can] critique because this time, nobody... they cannot critique because they [are] all strongmen [powerful]. I am his subordinate, but In my heart, I don't support this.

### Violence against police

1. 1:10:15. MAJ Nguyen: During the war, as this was a time of tremendous conflict, did you notice any tangible differences in the public's attitude toward the police? How so? [Pause, translation]

Col Nguyen: I think no. I give you my history. When I was a police commander in the precinct of Saigon [translation] in the city, you have the city people, especially the city council, sometimes they critique the police, they critique ... when you have acts of terrorist happen or a hold-up happens. He [city councilman] comes to me: he ask would you like me to create a new post of police? You critique the police, but when you think you are not in security you ask to create a new post [add more police to the force]. I say when nothing happens you critique the police; when you think something happens you ask for more police, more posts for police.

Mrs Chung: The police are never that popular.

Lt Col (Ret) Bouchat: not popular?

Mrc Chung: No, no, no one likes the police, except me!

- o 1:13:19. MAJ Nguyen: What about citizen violence against the police? (Examples: violence while resisting arrest, ambushing police officers, gun violence targeted at police)

[pause]

Col Nguyen: It is good for the population in Vietnam, no violence against police. It is good.,except for the extremists, the terrorists, and communists. No population against police.

Lt Col (Ret) Bouchat: Why do you think that is?

Mrs Chung: Vietnamese are kind of pacifist they don't shoot. A lot of people got guns, but don't go out and shoot like everywhere else, like Mexico and America. They don't use guns like that except like...

Col Nguyen: You know when I take the command of the police in Saigon it was 14 July [Bastille Day] the independence of the French embassy, and the French Embassy invites me. I ask my general the first time I come to the police the first time at the embassy. I go to bear the medal, French medal, because you bear the medal of the French nation you have to ask permission. But I have the valiant medal of the French.

Lt Col (Ret) Bouchat: Valor. Was this for military service?

Col Nguyen: No before, before when I worked for the French police.

They place me near the cultural council, and also the ambassador and his wife, and always his wife sneezes, sneeze you know. Her husband ask for security. She said because of you (she said to me). Her husband said no, Mr Coung [Col Nguyen], takes command of the police [today]. I ask, why, why do you think it is me? [She said] when you [translation] dismiss the demonstrations your grenades (tear grenades)...because when you dismiss the demonstrations, you disperse the demonstration you use the tear grenade...

Lt Col (ret) Bouchat: grenade?

Mrs Chung: grenade, yeah, grenade to dismiss the demonstration.

Lt Col (Ret) Bouchat: Ah, tear gas...

Col Nguyen: My embassy we received it in the nose, and I said madam I promise you today you will never sneeze again. And when I talk to the major, he commands the police field force, you take the video and you display for me. I see the youth and the real big problem because, the people are right -- you use too much! They go away and you continue to tear at them. From today when you disperse them, and you stop when they go away. Too much grenade use. Col Nguyen later added: [Referring to his field force commander], You must stop fighting when they go away, and not continue to shoot. You need the cooperation of the population.

- Did this have any effect on the police in terms of morale, recruitment, retention, management and or physical changes (like installing barriers surrounding the police department)? [Question not asked by the interviewer.]
- 1:19:18 MAJ Nguyen: What about violence from the Viet Cong and insurgents? Was this targeted violence toward police? What affects, if any, did this have on the police?
- [Translation, pause]  
Col Nguyen: No, I think I don't think they have any effect on the police, because the police especially the police mission. They know when they [are] accepted to work in the special police position they know, they know the danger. And they are men who don't like communism, they don't like communism. And they know the terrorist they have to attack.  
Col Nguyen later added: In Vietnam, all attacks against the police were from the VC [Viet Cong], not from the population.

### **Police stress, suicide, and morale during peace and wartime**

1. 1:20:45. MAJ Nguyen: Tell me about police stress, suicide, and morale during peace and wartime.  
[Translation]  
Col Nguyen: During my twenty years in the police I never, never know, I never know a suicide by any police. We have good morale.

### **III. PERSONAL EXPERIENCES**

1. 1:21:49. MAJ Nguyen: Tell me about the relationships between the Catholics and Buddhists. Did this have any effect on your career? How so?  
Col Nguyen: [Chuckles] It is a good question. You know when I receive my orders to take the command of the police in Nha Trang, many people advised me not to accept the post because in Nha Trang it is difficult and you will fail. I ask why? [They say] because you are Catholic, Because in Nha Trang during Ngo Dinh Diem [South Vietnam's first and controversial president], you know the history of Diem? He is Catholic, and the Buddhists know you are Catholic. Second because you are a French citizen [Col Nguyen's parents were French citizens so he had dual citizenship], and they don't like the French. And third because you are from South Vietnam [Nha Trang is in central Vietnam also known as Annam]. Because before I come here all of the previous [commanders] were not from the south. Fourth, because in Nha Trang they are many military: .American military forces, Vietnamese military forces; Navy, Air Force, Army,

and Ranger. You will have big difficulty. I went to Nha Trang -- nothing happened. I have a good relationship.

2. 1:24:32. MAJ Nguyen. What was the most rewarding part of your career?

[Translation]

Col Nguyen: I think that God blessed me because I have many difficulties, many difficulties, but everything you know everything is well, like when I was police in Saigon. You see the president, President [Nguyen Van] Thieu, he fight with the representatives [legislators] they are not that good. One day Vice President [Nguyen Cao] Ky he went to the Congress with the anti-government Congressmen, they want to go to the Presidential palace to protest something. President Thieu he said to me, he said to my general, tell Mr Coung [Col Nguyen] I don't want Vice President Ky to contact, to guide [unintelligible word] to my presidential palace. No, I don't want him to go there. If he lets him [Ky] go there I will demote him first and you after. That day, the commander of the airbase, the airport,[translation] he call me [translation] they take the air base to go to the Congress [note this was dual use military-civilian facility and Col Nguyen only had jurisdiction for the civilian side, and could not hinder Ky who arrived on the military side]. I don't know how, with the jeep, with the men, plenty of men to go to the Congress, and then to take the anti-government protesters to the presidential palace. I don't know how to stop it. I talk to my officers. Because of the Presidential order we have to execute [ie carry out the order to stop the protestors]. But if we execute, some conflict happens. We are strong enough you know to repulse them, but we have some casualties to side. What can we do? I don't know. You know I put one of our police officer in civilian [clothes], he comes to tell me the commander that the students, anti-government, they want to occupy the Congress to receive Vice President. I said oh, an idea comes to me. If it happens that the so so already? I ask the police to let the students occupy the Congress because then it is good for me. We can disperse them before the Vice President arrives. Fortunately, the anti-government student they invade the Congress. I have many police field force in civilian [clothes] to remove them. [discussion and translation]. I said today you can use too many tear gas grenades to disperse, to disperse the students, but we did disperse the Congressmen and the anti-government men. We use too much agent and the Congressmen and the anti-government and Vice President Ky don't go there [ie, the tear gas effects were overwhelming] because cannot disperse the Vice President, but we can disperse the student. It comes from God. Col Nguyen later added: I was embarrassed that VP Ky leaves the base unescorted. We have security because all of the buildings around the legislature are occupied by my men. I cannot use force, because if the police injure the VP that is a big problem. The VP had a Motorola radio, and when he knows that the protests are dispersed by tear gas, he goes away.

1:32:30 Lt Col {Ret} Bouchat: One question. You had said, but didn't tell me, the story about the Australians and the mine field and the hills. [repeated, pause]. You once told me the story about the Australian forces in Vietnam in a mine field in Vietnam. A story about Australians [translation]

Col Nguyen: The chief of Police of [unintelligible] he arrested a VC, you know, he arrested a VC infiltrator, in club in the club...

Mrs Chung: in the Australian club, mess hall...

Col Nguyen: and this one [translation]...

Mrs Chung: working for the laundry contract...

Col Nguyen: yeah laundry contract, and he work two or three years for the Australians. And the Australians ask for contractor, he work there a long time. We track him. We

can think he is VC...Ah, I think what you say is a different way [meaning Col Nguyen thinks he is telling the wrong story].

Lt Col (Ret) Bouchat: Continue this one...

Col Nguyen: He protest when I were, were the police commander because he was under the gendarme. He was in conflict with my police chief in Phu Tay [note: perhaps referring to Tan Phu Tay in the Mekong Delta region, where the informer was caught] and I show him, show him the document. I gave the document about...because we arrest someone in Saigon. He order the man working for the Australians to place claymore mine. We show the document, they then arrested him. Before the Australian didn't know. He worked three or four years. A very good man [the Australians thought]. After the arrest I show them the document.

MAJ Nguyen: so what did the document say?

Mrs Chung: That he was providing claymore mines for wrecking the Australian mess hall. But at first the Australians didn't believe him [Col Nguyen]. [translation]

Col Nguyen: When I was, one day I was in with the [clarification] general secretary for anti-terrorism in Saigon, and because it is the city center you have everyone, you have the officer from Vietnamese, from American, from Canadian no from Australians, from Korean, combined...

Mrs Chung: they call it the free world, free-world coalition...

Col Nguyen: the anti-terrorist center. But I would have to talk to them: every month we come here. You give me information, I give you information. But that is all, we go back. Nothing happens nothing helps. I would like to transform the sector center we can use our strength mutually. Everybody say nothing. But when [translation] bring official American officers to the headquarters, Marine and Air Force -- many officers killed, you know.

I present my wife, I take my wife by Air America to Da Lat to see my parents...

Mrs Chung: that was March 30 1971

Col Nguyen: you see what did happen, Mr Negoy, my CIA advisor, he send an American advisor to Da Lat highland, and you find Mr Cuong [Col Nguyen] and ask Mr Cuong to come back to Saigon. He elected me the General Secretary of the Center. He elected me without my presence, and he had me come back and take direction of the Center. He has Air America to take me back to the center. I don't know but now we can order because you know some like the Australian because he has a base near the mountain, near the forest. If we want something, [we] can go there with our force. But we can ask the Australians to look for us. You know, in the order if you want information in the enemy zone military, you ask the officer to help me, otherwise I can ask the American officer to permit me to take picture of terrorist in [translation] to take a picture in the tunnel...

Mrs Chung: VC strong hold...

Col Nguyen: we can have good region because in the tunnel of the Vietnamese military, I ask officer you don't have to use your force, all for one and one for all. It is the work of the CIA, one for all and all for one.