

TOM GLENN INTELLIGENCE OFC. '62-'65, '72-'75

Interviewer: What I'd like to do, as I mentioned a moment earlier, is to start at the beginning. How did you become involved in this war in Southeast Asia? What was your career path that led you there. I know you were there at the very earliest and clear to the end. Start at the beginning if you will and give me a sense of how this all happened.

GLENN: I got involved in this business because of my fascination with languages. I taught myself French and Italian as a child and in high school, I studied Latin for 4 years and in college, I added German. When I graduated from college, I wanted to fulfill my dream of studying Chinese. I wanted to go in the best language school in the world and that was the Army Language School at Monterrey, California. I enlisted in the army to go to language school and I looked forward to the intensive course, six hours a day, five days a week for a full year, studying Chinese, but the army didn't teach me Chinese. They taught me a thing called Vietnamese, which I had never heard of, because back in those days, we called it French Indochina.

I took Vietnamese. When I graduated, I wanted to go to Vietnam, but in its wisdom, the army instead sent me to Fort Mead. Since I was close to Washington, D.C., I enrolled in a Master's program in Chinese at Georgetown. I was all set. I had French, Vietnamese, Chinese, all languages commonly spoken in Vietnam and when I was a civilian again, I went to work for the government and immediately they sent me to Vietnam in 1962.

Interviewer: This is when the U.S. had a very early advisory role.

GLENN: That's right.

Interviewer: Could you describe what the politics were at that time?

GLENN: Until about 1964, all we were doing in Vietnam was trying to help the South Vietnamese government and my role at that point was to access an intelligence advisor, not to the Vietnamese, but to the American command. This was before MAAGV, Military Assistance Command Vietnam was established. It was called MAAG, Military Advisory and Assistance Group. I was there for 4 months. I went home. I got my wife and my child. I came back in 1963 for a full tour, took me up to 1965, doing essentially the same kind of work, acting as a go-between to bring the intelligence to the commanders who needed it.

No, in fact, the day that it happened, I was at my office in Saigon. I had no idea this was coming. I didn't know about the coup. The coup happened. Ngo Dinh Diem was killed and I immediately left my office. I couldn't get a taxi. There was no vehicle on the road. I ran all the way to my house, which was about 6 blocks away, because my little girl was there. When I got there, my wife was not there. She was being held, as it turns out, out at Tan Son Nhut, because she was teaching English to Vietnamese officers out there and as soon as the coup happened, everybody was held in place.

So I was there. When I got to the house, the servants were sitting in a circle around my little girl, because they were afraid shelling was going to start and they were trying to protect her. That is my principal memory of the coup and the murder of Ngo Dinh Diem.

Interviewer: Prepare for what might have looked like an imminent war.

GLENN: It was not an imminent war. It was going on in 1962 when I first got there. The North Vietnamese and let me make clear that the Vietcong, the VC, were nothing but the North Vietnamese under a different name. They pretended to be somebody different, but they weren't. The North Vietnamese had decided they were going to conquer South Vietnam and they were going to do it slowly, first by guerrilla warfare. They figured that would do it, so our role was to help the South Vietnamese face all of this, root out the communists, wherever they showed up and fight against them and from 1964 on that meant major war, not just guerrilla warfare in the field. Does that answer your question?

Interviewer: ... in those early years?

GLENN: Until 1964, we really were just advising, but after the Gulf of Tonkin incident when President Johnson decided to send forces into the country, it all changed and it changed very quickly, so all of a sudden my role became helping the American forces, so I went all over the country working with different units, helping them develop intelligence and report on it and that was my role until the very end. At the end, I was back in Saigon heading an office, but that's another story.

Interviewer: Well, what ...?

GLENN: Yes. They had a good chance, but working against them were a number of elements. One was corruption within the South Vietnamese way of doing business. It had always been that way and it still was, right up to the end. That weakened public support for the South Vietnamese government, but the major factor was that in 1974 and 1975, the United States congress gradually cut off

and then stopped altogether monetary support for South Vietnam and stopped air support and without that support, the communist easily overran the South Vietnamese.

Interviewer: And in '64 ...?

GLENN: That was when I started going out into the field. I went all over the country to different units, worked with them, these were intelligence units, helped them in their collection, in their analysis, in their reporting, their direct support to military units, any way I could and in a couple of cases, I became so ingrained in the units that they were sending me to brief the local U.S. general about what information we had. For example, warning the commander of the 4th Infantry Division in Pleiku in 1967 that the North enemies were about to attack them and by the way, he didn't believe me. His reaction at the time was why should I believe this crazy civilian dressed in fatigues that's out there with that crazy unit of these guys with a bunch of antenna sprouting from the hill, why should they know what the North Vietnamese are going to do? I just don't believe you.

That was a problem I faced throughout my time in Vietnam. Very often military commanders just did not believe me. The worst was at the end, when Ambassador Graham Martin did not believe that the North Vietnamese were going to attack Saigon.

Interviewer: We'll get into that at a later point in the interview. Was that the normal dress that the intelligence community wore?

GLENN: No. The story was this. I was working with the unit in Pleiku way up in the mountain. We were attacked one night and when that happened, all the guys I was working with rushed off with the battle boats. I was sitting in the Quonset huts where we were writing reports and going over the intelligence. I didn't know what to do. Nobody told me what to do if we were attacked, so I put on a helmet and a flak jacket and I went on working. I was writing a report that said we have evidence we were about to be attacked and by God we were right then, so I got that report done and sent it out.

The real reason I did that was that I didn't have the good sense or the background to know what to do in an attack. I just didn't know, so I just sat there. The military was extremely impressed with that. They thought I had enormous courage to go on writing the report and get it out when we were under fire and I didn't have the guts to tell them it was out of senselessness rather than courage, so they stole my fatigues. I was sleeping in a tent right along with the GIs. They stole all my fatigues and they had put on it my name and civilian. They took my [team 00:08:17] cap and they put a unit symbol on it

and that's where the picture comes from. They took a picture of me saying that I was a civilian working with them.

Interviewer: What was the ...?

GLENN: Almost none. I was trained on various hand weapons, a 38, which turned out at the end to be very important, because that was the only weapon I had. The 45, I think, of course, I had been trained with the M16 rifle when I was a soldier, but that was all it amounted to.

Interviewer: Getting back to the big picture, obviously you're Tet material.

GLENN: There were a number of actions taken which worked, but they weren't kept up. One was bombing the trails. That meant going into Laos, going into Cambodia and there was a lot of ado about that among the American public, but it just about had to be done. The other was putting men on the ground, on the trails to attack and stop those troops as they came through and that worked. It worked beautifully, but we didn't keep it up. That all got shunted aside, partly for political reasons and the net result was, particularly at the end in '74 and '75, the flow down that trail was enormous. By then, it was a highway that was paved and there were trucks driving down, bringing all these munitions into the country for the final attack.

Interviewer: How early did ... forces on the trail?

GLENN: I honestly don't remember when that started. It was fairly early. I'm going to say late '60s, but I just don't recall. We had been producing intelligence on the infiltration, [inaudible 00:10:01] material from North Vietnam into South Vietnam for, I think, starting in 1964. We had developed means that we could count the number of groups. We knew how many people were in the group. We had a very, very good handle on what was coming down that trail and where it was going and we reported all that to the military commanders, so they knew what was going on.

Well, in the first place, the Vietcong is a Vietnamese word that means Vietnamese communist. They were Vietnamese communists. Many of them were trained in North Vietnam. Many of them were, in fact, North Vietnamese army and the distinction between the Vietcong and the North Vietnamese is a false distinction. It was always the North Vietnamese, so let's get that out of the way right away. They were very good, even in those early years. They were using primarily guerilla tactics, because they thought that would, over time, bring down the South Vietnamese government. When the Americans came in in 1964, that all changed. Then, regular units are moving south and this began in 1964. It

was not in the late '60s at all and we had North Vietnamese divisions operating in South Vietnam, I think, as early as 1965.

These were regular army divisions. This was no longer guerillas. The North Vietnamese divided their forces into main force guerilla and local forces and the guerillas and the local forces had been operating throughout South Vietnam for a very long time and there were some North Vietnamese regular units in country way back in the early '60s, but not many. But, from '64 on, all that changed and the flow really got started.

Interviewer: Were you involved in some of these ...?

GLENN: I was aware of it. I knew it was going on, but I was not involved in it, except to the degree that I was collecting and reporting on the intelligence about the communist efforts to exploit the villagers and that was extensive. That was going on constantly and particularly in the early '60s, we were very successful in seeing what was going on, reporting on it and then letting South Vietnamese try to stop it.

Interviewer: So after the ...?

GLENN: '62 to '65, I was there almost full-time. From '65 to '74, it was in country, as I said, at least 4 months every year and then I came back in '60, '74, sorry, for another full length tour, this time with my wife and my 4 children.

Interviewer: During that period, were you stateside for most of those years that you were just making these period trips?

GLENN: I was going back and forth all the time. For example, in '67, it was clear that there were 2 army units who were producing intelligence that very much needed expertise, so I was sent to work with one up in the highlands in Pleiku and after that, down to [Vien Quan 00:12:59] to work with another one. That's just north of Saigon and as a result of my work there and the work of these 2 units, we were able to forecast with great accuracy the Tet offensive of January, 1968. As it turned out, I was on a plane back to the United States just when that broke, but we had already forecast it.

Interviewer: What was your ... down in the Tet Offensive of the MVA?

GLENN: I don't have any numbers on that. What's important to understand about the Tet Offensive is that it was a terrible failure on the part of the North Vietnamese. They lost every battle they fought, literally and they lost a huge number of people as a result of it. It was a great defeat. They saw it that way. What

happened in the United States was that we were so shocked by the fact that they were able to carry that off, that that gradually started shifting the support for the war away from continuing the war and toward closing it down. Just after that, in '69, I believe, Westmoreland was replaced by Creighton Adams ...

Interviewer: Abrams?

GLENN: Abrams, yes. He saw all the things that Westie had been doing wrong and by the way, I worked directly for Westie part of that time. I never called him Westie. I called him sir. When Abrams came in, he changed the strategy from search and destroy to search and hold and he was right. He had it correct. What Westmoreland's troops had been doing was engaging large force North Vietnamese units in huge battles. They always defeated them, but ignoring what was going on in the countryside, because that's where the war really was. It was the North Vietnamese converting the population to support them and not the South Vietnamese government.

Abrams understood that. He made every effort in the world to get people out into the countryside to fight at a much lower level, to fight smaller unit engagements and it was working. The only trouble was that by then, the American public had turned against the war and he was forced to close down, but had he been allowed to continue, we certainly would have won.

Interviewer: All right, getting back to the ...?

GLENN: Let me see how I can explain this without getting into classified material.

Interviewer: Isn't it all declassified now?

GLENN: Not all, no. There are indicators. There are certain things that units do that armies do as they prepare for an attack. We were able to spot those preparations by 1968. We had developed an excellent group of indicators. When X happens, Y follows and the North Vietnamese were so patterned in the way they did things that we could be quite sure it was going to happen.

For example, when they gathered troops together with units, started moving toward a target, that was an invariable indicator that an attack was coming and we could see them. We could figure out what was going on. Just before, starting in '67, while I was in Pleiku and then later in [Viet Hung 00:16:22], we saw these indicators popping up, not just in one area, but all over the country, everywhere and we said they are going to launch a countrywide offensive. It's coming. We don't know why they're doing that, because they're going to get slaughtered, but

they're going to do it and by God, they did and they did get slaughtered, as it happened. Does that answer your question?

Interviewer: Yes. That gives me a sense of it. I mean, where did this ...?

GLENN: No. I have always believed that the commander of MAAGV, who was Westmoreland at that point, did not believe it, but that's based in part on my record of having warned commanders over and over and over again that an attack was coming and not being believed and I don't think Westmoreland really believed when I told him look out, it's going to be a countrywide offensive. He nodded, smiled and went about his business and I don't think he believed it.

Interviewer: I find it incredible.

GLENN: It was, but you need to understand the fact that in those days, military commanders had never been used to depending on intelligence and they tended to question the intelligence operatives, because they would say how do you know such things? How could you possibly know that's true? That's no longer true, I'm told anyway. I'm no longer in the business, but I gather that now the intelligence people and the operations people are so close to each other that they're almost indistinguishable. That wasn't true back then. You had this civilian in fatigues with civilian written on his shirt going up to a general and saying you're about to be attacked and not being believed and, as I say, the classic example was Graham Martin at the end.

Interviewer: Right. I mean, of course we had a ...

GLENN: Right here I'm skirting on getting into classified stuff, but I think I'm okay. The big element was signals intelligence. It was very effective. It was very thorough, but it was also so arcane that many of these commanders had never even heard of it before and they were therefore hesitant to believe it when I would go to them and say the attack is coming. They would ask what my evidence was. I would give them the evidence and they'd say I don't know how you know that from that that an attack is coming, because they hadn't had years watching these indicators stack up, that every time X happens, Y follows. I knew that and I would tell them that and they just didn't believe me.

This was a constant problem. I even got to the point that I was referring to it as the Cassandra symptom.

Interviewer: Today we know that ...

GLENN: Ken, that's not something I can get into. Sorry.

Interviewer: So, during the ...

GLENN: Yes. As it happens, the day the offensive was launched, I was in the air flying back to the states, but I had already told everybody in Vietnam look out, it's coming. When I got back, I picked up the newspaper and there it was. The funny thing about that was that in those days, my wife would wonder why I got called in at all hours in the morning and all of a sudden would be sent to Vietnam again and then she'd wait until the Washington Post came out the following morning and she'd see the headlines and she'd say, "Now I know why."

Interviewer: With the South forces away from the south so the Tet would have more of an impact?

GLENN: I don't think it was, but I'd have to go back and really look at all of that much more carefully. I have always been persuaded that was a real battle where the North Vietnamese were trying to show they could defeat the American forces and on the whole, they did not succeed. They ended up taking enormous losses and after that, they were much more careful about when they engaged large American units.

Interviewer: Obviously ...

GLENN: I had great respect for both of those men and after the war, I came to realize that we had really blown it. Ho Chi Minh came to us and said, "Help me." This was years before the war, "Help me to get the French colonists out of my country," and we said, "No. We're going to support the French." So, of course, he went to the Chinese. He went to the Russians. The communist movement got started and then we were faced with this terrible situation, which we, in effect, created by turning him down. That wasn't genius. There's no question about that. He understood that the Americans, like the French, over time, would tire of this war and the way to win was to keep on fighting. If it took 30, 40, 50 years, just do it, because the Americans won't stick with it and he was right. We didn't.

Interviewer: I was a little surprised when I ...

GLENN: Ho Chi Minh had great respect for the United States and American philosophy and politics and he could have been a very great leader for Vietnam, had he not gone over to the communist side, but he had no support from us, so that's what he did. Ken, I didn't foresee that the American public was going to withdraw support for the war, because on the ground was Creighton Abrams and the way he was pursuing the war, all the indicators were we were going to do well.

When we did withdraw our assistance to South Vietnam, I realized what was happening and it was too late. There was nothing I could do about it, but at the time, the Ambassador Graham Martin saw the Vietnam tour for Americans as being a gentleman's tour. The war was over in his mind. We had already defeated the North Vietnamese and it's true that right after the signing of the Accords in 1973, I guess it was, the war did tamp down quite a bit. Our thought was we would go to Saigon, we'll have a gentleman's tour, I will do my job and then at the end of that tour, we'll come back, go back to the states.

All those ways of looking at it were wrong, not militarily. Had we pursued our military strategy, we would have succeeded, but we didn't count on the collapse of American support for the war and the American congress withdrawing all of its support, all the aid. I saw that happening and I thought, my God, this is going to be the end. I saw it coming long before it happened, because I thought this is the end. Besides that, I was into intelligence.

I saw that starting in 1974, the North Vietnamese were flooding into South Vietnam, trekking people down the Ho Chi Minh Trail, bringing in huge number of units and toward the end, I just found out from reading North Vietnamese documents, they decided they would risk their strategic forces in that final struggle, even though it would leave them largely defenseless in the north and they moved everything they had into the south. I saw that happening. I told everybody it was happening and of course, the ambassador, he may or may not have believed me, but he didn't take any actions on the grounds of what I was telling him.

Interviewer: Tell me about taking your family ...

GLENN: As I say, back in those days, it was a gentleman's tour. I had my wife and my 4 children with me. We lived in a beautiful villa on [Lavenciet 00:24:22] Street, very close to the Presidential Palace and my wife was in her glory. She was Mrs. General around Saigon and she went to all the teas and receptions and that kind of thing. My children did not like it. They could see the poverty. They could see the illness in the people in the streets. My wife was blind to all that. She didn't care about all that. They saw it. They didn't like it. They wanted to get out and just 20 days before the city fell, they did get out. I finally was able to arrange to get them out of the country.

I can tell you the story about how I did that if you want.

Interviewer: Yes. I'd like to hear it.

GLENN: By January, 1975, it was obvious to me that the end was coming. The major thing that happened that month was that the North Vietnamese carried out an offensive in [Phuc Long 00:25:21] Province, 60 miles north of Saigon and for the first time in the history of the war, they captured the province and the provincial capital and they held it. That had never before happened. So, I said I'd better review my evacuation plans because this does not look good.

Turned out, I found out many years later, the North Vietnamese were testing us. We had said that if the North Vietnamese violated the 1973 Peace Accords, we would re-intervene. The attack on Phuc Long and the taking of Phuc Long was obviously a gross violation of those accords and we did nothing. I thought oh, God. This is the end. I could see it coming. I reviewed our evacuation plans. I had 3 men out in the field. First of all, I verified that they were all on the evacuation plans of the consuls in those areas and I verified that I could reach them both by telephone and by radio instantly if things went to pieces suddenly.

On the 9th of March, I flew north with my counterpart a Vietnamese general on a trip to the northern half of the country, because we already knew from the intelligence that that's where the next major action was going to happen. The North Vietnamese had their troops moving toward targets. We could see them. We went way up in the far north to Pleiku in the central highlands and then down to [Bon Mah Twa 00:26:55], a little town in the southern part of the highlands, because we knew that that was where the attack was going to begin. When we got to Pleiku, we had a courtesy visit with the commander of [Tucor 00:27:06], South Vietnamese Major General, [Funt Won 00:27:11] Phu.

General Phu did not believe an offensive was coming and he couldn't imagine that that little town of Bon Mah Twa to his south would be the first target, because after all, he was the most important man in Tucor and he was at Tucor headquarters in Pleiku. The general that I was traveling with cancelled the rest of the trip and flew immediately to Bon Mah Twa. By the time we landed, the battle had already started. We were on an air strip that was up on a ridge and there were valleys to the west and to the east. While he was talking to his troops, I looked down in that valley to the west and I saw a battle start.

We took off almost immediately, but as we were taking off, the airstrip came under fire. Bon Mah Twa fell within days and the President of South Vietnam, Nguyen Van Thieu ordered an evacuation of the highlands. I called my guy in the highlands home immediately. He just barely made it out. Panic ensued. All the population and the military people in Pleiku tried to flee to the coast, but by that time, the North Vietnamese had already captured all of the principal highways in the area. The only road that was open was a little secondary bypass that was called Route 7B. That road came to be called the trail of blood and tears because

so many people died on that road. Eighteen thousand military people tried to reach the coast. Almost none of them made it. Over 100,000 civilians tried to reach the coast. Only a handful got there.

Almost immediately, I Corps, the northern 5 provinces of the country crumbled. I called my guy back. He just barely made it out just before the mobs took the aircraft on the landing strip in Da Nang, but he did get back. Once the northern half of the country was in communist hands, I knew now that capitulation was only weeks away.

I turned my attention to persuading the Ambassador Graham Martin that we had to evacuate people immediately. Among other things, I had 2700 South Vietnamese who would work for me. Not work for me, had worked with my organization over the years and I was determined to get those guys out of the country, because I knew what would happen to them if the North Vietnamese captured them. The ambassador wouldn't listen.

I had 43 guys working for me, Americans in Saigon. Their families were living in Saigon and I wanted those people out of there now, but the ambassador wouldn't allow it. He wouldn't allow evacuation, so the one hand, he didn't want to stampede the South Vietnamese by making it look like the Americans were running away, but the major thing was he could not imagine that the communist flag would ever fly over South Vietnam. It could not happen. It was unthinkable. So, my American boss sent me a cable saying close on the operation. Get everybody out before somebody gets killed. The ambassador wouldn't allow it. I made him a proposition. I said, "Look, I'll stay with a communicator and a communications maintenance man to keep the intelligence flowing from Washington to you, but let my people go. He turned me down.

So I cheated. I sent people out on any ruse I could think of. Some I had to order out directly because they didn't want to leave me behind. Some I sent out on phony business trip, while others on trumped up vacations and still others on made up early home leave, anything to get them out of the country and toward the end, I took money out of my own pocket. I bought a guy a ticket on Pan Am with no orders and no authorization. I put him on the flight and I told him, "Go." That was the last Pan Am flight out of Saigon.

Since I knew I had to stay, I asked for 2 volunteers, a communicator and a communications maintenance man. Most of my guys in my com shop said ah, well, they'd like to stay, but they were family men and they didn't feel it was right to risk their lives. Then 2 brave men stepped forward. I'll just call them Bob and Gary. Bob was communicator. Gary was a maintenance man. I explained to them the danger. I told them we might be shelled. We might not have electricity.

I couldn't tell what was going to happen. They understood the danger and they agreed to stay with me. As long as I live, I will admire, no, I will love those 2 guys for their raw courage. They risked their lives because I asked them to.

I knew I'd have to get out and get around and I knew some things in the city, but I was out of Tan Son Nhut, right on the northern edge of Saigon in a compound that was surrounded by a fence. Inside that compound was the old MAAGV building. Military Assistance Command Vietnam building was so big, we called it Pentagon East. Outside that perimeter fence, crowds were gathering and I knew that the streets of Saigon were getting more and more filled. I had long since moved out of our villa, after I got my family out under a ruse, by the way. I pretended like we were going to a vacation in Bangkok.

I moved out to my office. I started sleeping on a cot with a 38 under my pillow. I had to get out, because there were several things I had to do, so I did. I first sent my chauffer, who always ferried me around town in this great big black sedan with American flags and diplomatic plates and I told him to use that sedan, put his family in it, use his American ID to get them onto the military side of Tan Son Nhut airbase and get on any outgoing plane he could. He did that. Then, I took over the sedan. My thinking was that big impressive car would scare the mobs away enough that I could get through and I had it exactly backwards.

Instead of driving my little Japanese sedan, which would have been much wiser, I took that big car and that attracted the mobs and in fact, I was mobbed once, but I bared my teeth and I raised the 38. They backed off just enough I could get through.

I'll tell you about 2 trips I made. One was to visit a South Vietnamese officer, an intelligence officer I worked with over the years, a man for whom I had great admiration and respect, a true professional in our business. I had to go and see him face-to-face because I had to tell him where he and his troops should go when the evacuation order was given and that was not something I could discuss on an unsecure telephone line.

When I got to his office, he, the soul of Asian politeness, invited me in. He sat me down. He served me tea. He told me that his wife, who worked for USAID, the United States Agency for International Development, had been given the opportunity to leave the country with her family. That included him, but he wouldn't go. No evacuation order had been given and he wouldn't abandon his troops and if he wouldn't go, she wouldn't go.

So there they were, a husband and wife and their 3 children, still sitting inside and I said, "What are you going to do when communist tanks are rolling in the

streets?" He said to me, "I cannot live under the communists. When the communists come, I will shoot my 3 children. I will shoot my wife and I will shoot myself." He didn't escape at the end. I have every reason to believe, he carried out his plan, because so many other South Vietnamese officers did precisely what he described.

My last foray was very near at the end. I got through the mobs. I got to the embassy. I got in to see the ambassador and I pleaded with him to evacuate everybody immediately. I told him what I had already reported to him and that was that the city was surrounded by 16 to 18 North Vietnamese divisions and less than 2 miles north of my office was a communist unit that was waiting for their order to attack. He put his arms around my shoulder and he walked me to the door and he said, "Young man, as you get older, you'll understand these things better."

I was frantic. I went down the hall to the office of an intelligence officer, a man very much like myself and I said, "Tom, we've got to get out of here." He laughed. He showed me a cable that the ambassador released that morning to the President of United States and to the Secretary of State that said we can disregard all that intelligence evidence of a forthcoming attack, because it is all based on successful North Vietnamese communications deception. I was stunned. I said, "What evidence do you have, what evidence does the ambassador have of communication of deception?"

He waved my question away and bet me a bottle of champagne, vintage and chateau of my choice that a year from that day we would both still be in Saigon, still at our desk, still doing our jobs in a routine way. I ran into that guy back in the states, many months later, but he never made good on his bet.

On the 21st of April, the town of Xuan Loc fell. That was 40 miles northeast of us. That was after a heroic defense by the South Vietnamese 18th division and after that, we were surrounded. No question about it.

On one of the days, the 22nd of April, I believe it was, the defense intelligence agency in the United States issued an estimate that South Vietnam wouldn't last more than another week. It comforted me no end to understand that the secretary of defense and the commander in chief in the Pacific understood what was going on in Vietnam. They were under no delusions, but the ambassador didn't work for them and although the president or the secretary of state countermanded him, he could keep us there as long as he wanted.

On the 26th of April, I was on my cot in my office between my 2 flags, the American flag and the South Vietnamese flag, that was right in front of my desk. I

had my 38 under the pillow. There was a huge explosion, threw me to the floor. I got up, ran to the com center. The guys looked dazed. The equipment was working and we got a dispatch telling us that the ammunition at Viet Hung, just north of us had just been blown up by the North Vietnamese. That meant the tension in the city was going to ratchet up a couple notches and I was prepared for the worst.

I started doing physical recon through the compound, getting out, walking around, taking burn bags full of messages, burning them in the incinerator, sometimes just walking the halls and I spotted Americans I'd never seen before. These were young guys, looked like teenagers with buzz cuts. They were very muscular. They were wearing T-shirts and tank tops and shorts and tennis shoes and when 2 or 3 of them would be walking together, they'd fall into step as if marching and I thought, it's marines in mufti. What the hell's going on?

I found out that night. I was again in my office, trying to get some rest when the door chime sounded. I took my 38, I went to the door, I looked out through the peephole and there I saw a middle aged American male with red hair, the wildest Hawaiian shirt you have ever seen in your life, colors so bright they hurt my eyes, shorts and flip flops. He gave me a round fingered wave and a silly grin and I recognized him. It was Al [Gray 00:40:47]. He was a marine colonel I had worked with over the years in Vietnam. I had never before seen Al out of uniform. I didn't even think he owned any civilian clothes and he never came to Saigon, except when he had to, because he hated bureaucracy and his job is in the field with his troops.

I put aside the 38. I let him in, went into my office. We talked. I told him everything I knew about the military situation, but he knew more than I did. What he didn't know very well was what was going on with the friendlies, the South Vietnamese. I described to him those mobs that were in the streets of the city, so that I couldn't even get out with my car anymore. I told him about the mobs surrounding the compound. People desperate to be evacuated. Crowds were now 10 to 15 people deep. He had seen them, so he understood. He told me that he had been named the ground security officer. That meant he was in charge of the evacuation on the ground, but the ambassador was doing everything he could to throw roadblocks in Al's way.

He would not allow Al to come into Saigon or any troop to come into Saigon in uniform. They had to be in mufti, civilian clothes. He wouldn't allow Al to come in on marine helicopters. They had to fly in on the little Air America civilian [inaudible 00:42:08], which only held 8 to 14 people, so they're coming in, going out, coming in, going out and worst of all, he wouldn't allow Al and his men to stay in the country more than 24 hours. They had to come in, do their work and

go back out again. It didn't matter. The marines had landed and I knew once that evacuation order was given, they'd execute it instantly.

The next day I went out on my physical recons, partly to keep awake, because I was getting more and more in bad shape and I'll come back to that. When I was out there, I spotted the marines. They were still in mufti and I talked to them and I said, "What's going on? I'll trade scuttlebutt with you."

They told me, among other things, that those crowds outside the gates were throwing babies over the fence. They wanted their children to escape from the communists. Now that fence was about 2 stories high and at the top, it was turned outwards with barbed wire going along the edge, so that nobody could scale the fence and come down into the compound. There was nobody to catch the babies on the other side, so if they succeeded in throwing them hard enough that they went over the top of the fence and came down, those kids were killed when they hit the ground. Many of them didn't make it over the fence, but hit the pavement on the outside and they were killed, too.

On the 29th of April, we were down to just 3 people. I'd gotten 42 of my guys out of the country. The families were all out. There were just the 3 of us, Bob, Gary and me. We set up a regimen where one guy would sleep for 2 hours while the other 2 guys worked. I moved my cot and my 38 into the com center. We locked all the other rooms in the office suite and we went on a regimen and that I describe, our diet consisted of bar snacks we'd been able to scrounge while we could still get out and get into the city and I found out, for example, that Vienna sausages can be eaten straight from the can cold and that pickled relish with enough mustard on it, if eaten in quantity can stave off serious hunger. Granted, I developed bowel problems, but at the time, I attributed that more to the tension I was under than anything else.

That was about the time I realized I wasn't operating on all cylinders. I was coughing constantly. I had trouble focusing my eyes. I felt like I was running a fever and the worst thing was if I sat down, I'd lose consciousness. I'd either go to sleep or I'd pass out. I couldn't tell what it was, but it didn't matter. I had to keep going, so I did.

On the evening of the 28th, actually just before sunset, I made a head run. Pentagon East, that magnificent building, was now in shambles. Lights were burned out in the hallways. Trash, litter, broken furniture littered the hallways. The latrines were filthy and the smelled disgusting. I ran into guys on step ladders. They were running wire through the ceiling and they said they were wiring the building for destruction. Last one out lights the fuse and runs like hell, they joked.

I went into the men's room. I was standing in front of the urinal when the wall in front of me snapped out as if to swat me down and then slapped back into place again. There was a huge explosion. I fell to the ground. Now, any sensible person at that point would have taken cover, but I didn't. I wanted to know what was going on, so I left the men's room. I went down the hall to the western door going out into the compound. I went down the hallway to the door on the western side of the building, opened that door, unlocked it, went outside and on that side of the building, the compound fence was only about 10 to 18 feet away from the wall. Sandbags had been piled up to protect us from shrapnel and I shaded my eyes and looked across the runway, because I wanted to know what that explosion was.

My ears picked up the drone of triple prop aircraft. I looked up and I spotted them, 5 of them, 5 A-37 Dragonfly fighters and while I watched, they came together, they went into a dive over the runway and they dropped bombs. The resulting explosion knocked me to the ground for the second time, but I was up and on my feet running back into the building, slammed the door, locked it, ran back to my office. We got a new message telling us that South Vietnamese pilots, some of them trained in the United States, had defected to North Vietnam and they were bombing Tan Son Nhut.

That was the beginning. We were bombarded all night long, first by rockets and then about 4 in the morning, the artillery started. One C-130 on the runway just to the back of the building was destroyed. Two others took off empty because they would have been destroyed. The building next to ours exploded, but the worst thing that happened was the marines at the gate, the men I had been talking to were hit. Two of them were killed. Their names were Judge and McMahan. They were the last fighting men killed on the ground in Vietnam.

I remember going into the com center after that. The air was smoky. It smelled like burning gasoline, but Bob and Gary were still okay and then we would have another bombardment. The room would lurch. Everybody would take cover and we would go on. One memory sticks from that awful night. I was on my cot trying to get my 2 hours' worth of sleep when the next bombardment started. I sat straight up and hung on to the cot. The room jumped one way or another. Straight ahead of me there was Bob. He was sending out a message telling the world that we were being attacked. While the room lurched, that piece of equipment he was typing on rose up 5 feet in the air and then slammed back in place, but Bob never stopped typing.

Right after that, we got in a message telling us that Frequent Wind phase 4 had been declared. That was the code word for the evacuation. The evacuation was on.

After [inaudible 00:49:25], I got a call from that Vietnamese officer I had visited, a telephone call. He said he'd been trying to reach his general, but nobody answered. I dialed the general's telephone number. Nobody answered. I found out much later that general had gotten out of his compound through the streets of Saigon to the embassy over the wall and he had been evacuated safely while his 2700 troops still sat in position awaiting orders from him. I called the embassy. I said, "The evacuation's been declared. Get us out of here." The woman I talked to was polite. She was even gracious and she explained to me as one does to a child that we were 4 miles away from the embassy and there was nothing she could do for us. Although I probably didn't know it, all those people in the streets had gone into rioting. Well, of course I knew it. I could see them.

I won't repeat to you what I said to her. It's not printable, but her response was, "Oh, you're very welcome." I tracked down Al Gray. I said, "You've got to get us out of here. The embassy can't." He said, "I'll do it. The other events of that day, the 29th of April are very confused in my mind. I was in very bad shape. I was running a fever, but I didn't know it at the time. I'll tell you what I do remember. I pleaded with Al Gray to get my 2 communicators out. After all they'd been through, I couldn't tolerate the idea that they would be killed or wounded. At about 2:00 that afternoon, when they flew out on that chopper, I knew my work was finished.

After that, I remember being in a room. I had been told to wait until it was time for me to be evacuated. I was sitting in a chair. We were being bombarded again. The chair was jumping as the room shuddered. I was trying to keep awake. I wanted to get to a telephone. I wanted to assure myself that Bob and Gary were safe aboard a ship of the 7th Fleet. The 7th Fleet was anchored out in the South China Sea at that point and I especially wanted to assure myself that there was 2700 South Vietnamese were being evacuated, but I couldn't get out of the room. At that point, the building had been broken into by South Vietnamese air force officers. They were seeking evacuation at gunpoint, so we had to be very careful about where we went and what we did.

The next thing I remember is being outside. It was getting dark and raining. There were helicopters all throughout the compound. I pleaded with Al Gray not to send me out until I had confirmation that Bob and Gary were safe, but he was having none of that and in words I can't repeat to you, he said for me to get myself on that chopper now. So, I did. I was carrying those 2 flags that had stood on both sides of my desk, the stars and stripes and the orange and gold banner of the now defunct Republic of Vietnam.

I didn't get on one of the big CH-53's, one of the marine helicopters. I got on a little slick run by Air America. As soon as we were airborne, I saw the tracers

coming at us. We took so much lead in the fuselage, I thought we were going to go down, but we didn't. We made it. The instant we were feet wet, that is to say over water, the pilot dropped the bird down to just above the surface of the ocean. My stomach stayed up in the sky. He told me he had to do that, because the North Vietnamese had surfaced air missiles and they might try to shoot us down.

I don't remember the flight to the 7th Fleet. Maybe I passed out, I'm not sure, but I was conscious when we got to the Oklahoma City, the Flagship of the 7th Fleet. The pilot circled and then very slowly went down and landed on the flood lit helipad of the ship. He told me later that he, a civilian pilot, had never before landed on a ship. We got out of the helicopter. Flashbulbs went off. Somebody took my 38 from me and then sailors pushed that helicopter over the side of the ship.

I went through some kind of processing. I think I filled out forms. Maybe I answered questions. I don't know, but the next thing I remember clearly is shivering. I was very cold. I was in a berth, a kind of canvas hammock sort of an affair in a room that was lit only by a red bulb on the bulkhead and above me, below me and on all sides of me, people were sleeping. I got out of that thing, got down to the floor, found out I could walk. I got to a latrine and for the first time in weeks, I brushed my teeth, shaved and I took a shower.

Then I found the wardroom. I ate a breakfast and a half. I was surrounded by the most ungodly crew you had ever seen, Vietnamese and Americans, men and women. The men all needed to shave. The women were disheveled, but there was an older man in a suit, who still had his tie pulled up to his throat.

After I'd eaten my fill, I went on deck. It was daylight. I must have slept for a long time. I watched South Vietnamese helicopters approach the ship, cut their engines and fall into the ocean. They sank to the bottom while the pilots were pulled aboard. I looked to the west and as far as I could see, as well as in between and among all the ships of the 7th Fleet, there were sand pans and junks and fishing vessels and tugs and commercial vessels and what looked like large row boats, all of them filled with Vietnamese calling to us, begging to be evacuated.

Somebody found out I spoke Vietnamese. They asked me to go to the com center and broadcast a message on a frequency that many of these boats might be able to hear. They'd give me the English text, I'd say it in Vietnamese. I did that. I repeated 4 or 5 times. Then, my voice gave out. I couldn't talk anymore. I told those boats, they'd have to go back to the mainland, because there was no more room on any of the ships of the 7th Fleet, that we were loaded to capacity

and that was true. We had people sleeping on the stairways and in the hallways and provisions were running low. It was only much later that I realized what I had done. Many of those boats were so far out, they couldn't make it back. Many of them didn't make it back and many of those people died at sea.

We circled for a while. Then, we headed for the Philippines to Subic Bay. Once I was there, I immediately got a flight to Honolulu, because I knew I had to go to Pearl Harbor to brief CINCPAC, Commander in Chief of the Pacific. That briefing was very short, because I couldn't talk. My voice was giving out. I was coughing constantly and for the first time, it dawned on me that something was really wrong with me, beyond just exhaustion, because I'd been sleeping the whole time that ship was circling, but I wasn't getting better. I was getting worse. Any sensible person would have gone to a doctor right then, but I didn't. I so yearned to go home. I can't tell you how much I wanted just to go home.

I booked a flight for Baltimore with a stopover in San Francisco and when I got to San Francisco, I tried to get to a doctor, but they were having a doctor strike in San Francisco, so no physician would see me. Flew on to Baltimore. The next day, I did get in to see a doctor. He diagnosed me with pneumonia due to sleep deprivation, muscle fatigue and inadequate diet. That's the story of what happened at the end.

Interviewer: Your family, had they already gone?

GLENN: The story there was this. Let's see if I can remember all the details. On the 4th of April, there was the beginning of a project that was called Operation Baby Lift. That was President Ford's way of getting orphans out of the country. By that point, I was so anxious to get my people out, I considered sending some of them out on those flights, telling the volunteer to take care of the orphans and just go, particularly my secretary. She was the only woman still left in my office. Thank God I didn't, because that flight, it was a C5A Galaxy, the largest airplane I've ever seen, 6 stories tall.

It took off on the 4th of April loaded with orphans and with adults who had taken care of them en route to the United States and it crashed. One hundred and thirty-eight people were killed, 78 orphans and 35 people that worked in my building. We all knew somebody who died in that crash.

The next day, I took my wife out to lunch at the nicest restaurant in Saigon to break the news to her that she and the children had to leave the country. She was incredulous. Just that morning, she'd been to a coffee in the embassy. Officials had assured her and all the other attendants, there was nothing to worry about. They could disregard all those reports about forthcoming attacks,

because they were not true. I couldn't persuade her. Finally, she laid down 3 conditions and I said I'd meet them. One was she could pick the date that she flew. I said, "You got it." Second, she and the children could tour the world on the way home, take 3 or 4 weeks just to go everywhere and I said, "Go. Do it." Finally, she said when she got back to the states, she wanted to buy a brand new Buick station wagon. I said, "Do it. You got it."

I got the tickets to fly out on the 9th of April. This was a ruse. According to everything that was officially published, they were going on a vacation to Bangkok, because I could not evacuate them. On the 8th of April, on the day before they were due to go out, a renegade South Vietnamese pilot bombed the Presidential Palace close to our house. My wife and my children were terrified. Now she was more than willing to go, but because of the curfew that was declared in the wake of the attack, I had to pull rank to drive my family in that big sedan through the streets of Saigon, constantly being stopped at checkpoints, showing my papers, proving that I had the rank to violate the rules and I finally got them to Tan Son Nhut.

When they got on that airplane for Bangkok, I was greatly relieved. That's how they got out.

Interviewer: That's quite an amazing story and thank you. A lot of people are still here today because of your actions.

GLENN: Yes and my subordinates ... let me back up. We generally, for years, got together on the 29th of April to commemorate the fall of Saigon. We never talked about the things we went through. We told jokes. We drank beer. We ate, but at one of those gatherings, they gave me a plaque, Last Man Out plaque, where they thanked me for saving their lives. That and the medal that I got for my work during the fall of Saigon are my most precious possessions today.

Interviewer: Have you ever returned?

GLENN: I have no desire to go back, none whatever.

Interviewer: Too many memories.

GLENN: Too many memories. When I got back, I had pneumonia. I mentioned that. Also, my hearing had been damaged. That's why I have to wear these infernal devices, hearing aids, but the worst thing was that I had an obvious case of something we didn't have a name for then. We call it now Post Traumatic Stress Injury. I had the flashbacks. I had the nightmares. I had the panic attacks, the whole thing, but I was in intelligence and I had top secret code word plus clearances. Had I

gone for psychotherapy, I would have lost my clearances and therefore would have lost my job. My marriage collapsed. The only thing I could do was to do what I had done all my life. I have always been a writer, so I sat down and wrote down what happened, all the God awful things that happened in Vietnam.

I wrote and I wrote and I wrote. I found out just last year that writing down what happened is one of the most effective cures for PTSD. So, in an odd sort of a way, I helped cure myself. Now, I still have panic attacks every once in a while and I get uncomfortable in a room like this, where I can't be sure where the exit is and I can't stand 4th of July celebrations with all the explosions, but for the most part, I'm rational.

Interviewer: Well, thank you again. It's an amazing story, Tom.

GLENN: Thank you.

Interviewer: Thank you for sharing with us.

GLENN: My pleasure.

Interviewer: Great.