

~~Subject~~

Special Operations

Guests : Mitchell

Herbell ~~who runs~~

~~creates terrorist training~~

~~school~~; General

Daniel Graham, ~~former~~

~~Dir. of D.T.A.~~;

General Jack Singlaub;

Noel Koch

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PROGRAM Jack Anderson Confidential STATION WJLA-TV
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SUBJECT Special Operations

JACK ANDERSON: A raging debate is going on behind the guarded doors of the nation's secret intelligence apparatus. It's a dispute over the country's ability to carry out covert missions. They're known as special operations. Some call them dirty tricks.

MITCHELL WERBELL: The use of teams of personnel to dis-establish certain governments, to heavy cases, to correct a government policy by the removal of personnel, one way or another.

ANDERSON: That was Mitchell Werbell. He knows what he's talking about. He's been involved in special operations all his life. Today Werbell runs a counter-terrorist training school outside Atlanta. His experienced instructors train the security forces of other countries. My associate John Lee Anderson visited him at his estate. Werbell talked about his career as an independent contract agent for the government.

WERBELL: I've been in seven revolutions. I've been involved in about coup d'etats. I have operated in practically every country, with the exception of any of the Eastern bloc.

A special operation could be likened to one of the things that I did not too long ago, where there was a great deal of kidnapping going on in Argentina. And a major U.S. company, who were under kidnapping threats and who had had several of their executive corporation people kidnapped, came to me to go down and stop it.

Well, there's only one answer to handling kidnapers, and that's to kill them. Once they've stepped over the line,

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their lives are forfeited.

ANDERSON: Werbell's candor is most unusual for men in his business. He speaks up on subjects that most others discuss only behind closed doors. But his commitment to covert operations is shared by many of the nation's ranking intelligence officers.

One of them is Lieutenant General Daniel Graham, the former Director of the Defense Intelligence Agency. He also expressed his views candidly.

GENERAL DANIEL GRAHAM: Well, they call them dirty tricks, but actually the main reason you've got to have that capability is that if you've got -- your national interests are threatened by some development within some country, you don't want to be stuck with the choice of running down to the U.N. and complaining or landing the Marines. You want to have something in between. So what you do is you have covert operation capabilities that can range all the way from just bagmen coming in with money to try to buy your way out of the situation or people that actually have to go in and take some military-type action, or to help military factions within the country involved.

REPORTER: Where do you think we stand now in our capability to react in a critical situation, General?

GENERAL GRAHAM: Well, we're in pretty bad shape, I think. As a matter of fact, we're in critical shape.

ANDERSON: Why is our special operations capability in such critical shape? Well, General Graham blames the exposures of the Watergate era. Investigations into CIA abuses were conducted by Idaho Senator Frank Church and New York Congressman Otis Pike.

Here's how Graham feels about it.

GENERAL GRAHAM: Well, I think what happened was that special operations are bound to be -- have a certain clandestine aspect to them. In other words, you've got to have very good intelligence and you have to do things with an eye to security. And when the whole Church-Pike Committee intelligence circus went on, why, they really put the damper on doing anything right in special operations.

It's just simply a fact that clandestine operations, operating things, and espionage really go hand-in-hand, and you can't separate the two. And if you kill off our capabilities to gather intelligence with human beings, you begin to kill off covert operations. That's one part of it.

The other part of it was that such a great hurrah was made of such things as alleged attempts to assassinate Castro, and so forth, that the whole -- I think the military just got scared of its own special operations capabilities. Certainly CIA did. And Tuner came along; he fired 800 of them. So the guts were stripped out of what is a very important function for any country that wants to call itself a superpower.

ANDERSON: Certainly the United States didn't look much like a superpower when it conducted the most famous special operation in U.S. history, the failed attempt to rescue the hostages in Iran. That unhappy mission was executed by our elite Delta team. The Delta force is composed of the armed forces' special or non-conventional warfare elements, the Army's Green Berets and Rangers, the Air Force's Air Commandos, the Navy's Seals, and sometimes the Marines' long-range reconnaissance team.

My associate John Lee Anderson visited the Marine base at Camp Lejeune, North Carolina, where the reconnaissance teams receive their basic training.

Most experts agree that the failure of the Iran rescue mission cannot be blamed upon the brave men who participated in it. The fault was in the command structure. A board of inquiry recommended a remedy. The board called for a joint special operations command coordinated by the Joint Chiefs of Staff. But many experts believe this is not enough.

One of them is General Jack Singlaub. He's one of the highest-ranking Army officers trained at special operations. He's divided his career between the CIA and the Army.

GENERAL JACK SINGLAUB: I think there is a recognition that we are under attack now, we're losing the war, and unless we do something in an offensive way, not just in a defensive way, we're going to continue to lose. You know, it's like a football game. You can't win a football game by staying on your side of the 50 yard line. You have to carry the ball in an offensive way and cross the enemy's goal line, your opponents' goal line. And this is true in this war that we are in. We are under attack by a very large, well-trained, well-funded force, and we're pretending that we're at peace. And that's our basic problem, is the failure to recognize the totality of the conflict in which we are currently engaged.

ANDERSON: Noel Koch is the Defense Department's Assistant Secretary for Policy. He's a strong advocate of special operations.

NOEL KOCH: We are in the process of evolving a policy which we think is adequate to our contemporary needs, to the

contemporary threat. Along with that, we're increasing funding to increase force structure, to increase the assets that are required to train, to deliver, to extract special operations forces.

ANDERSON: Could we mount a special operation anywhere in the world?

KOCH: As a practical matter? As a practical matter, I think we could. I don't think it; I know it. As a political matter, as a legal matter, that would be another question. But we do have that capability.

ANDERSON: The Reagan Administration is slowly, quietly rebuilding our covert capability. Some say it's not moving fast enough.