

Interviewer:

Good afternoon. Today is 19 October 2015, and I am here in the Center for Oral History with General Scaparrotti. Good afternoon, sir.

GEN Curtis Scaparrotti:

How you doing?

Interviewer:

Fine, sir.

Interviewer:

Thank you, sir. Could you please spell your last name for our transcriber?

GEN Curtis Scaparrotti:

Yes, itâ€™s Scaparrotti, S-C-A-P-A-R-R-O-T-T-I.

Interviewer:

Now, sir, youâ€™re class of 1978, correct?

GEN Curtis Scaparrotti:

Thatâ€™s correct, yep.

Interviewer:

Tell me a little bit about your childhood, and what got you interested in West Point.

GEN Curtis Scaparrotti:

Yeah. My father was a soldier, served in World War II, came out, went into the Reserves, and then full-time National Guard, so I grew up with my dad serving. And you know, actually what brought me to West Point was watching him serve as a soldier. I spent some time with him in his units. He would take me out when they were out in the field occasionally, and I just I think from a very young age thought, â€œMan, this is something I really want to do.â€ Itâ€™s an interesting story that when he was a First Sergeant, you know, outside of his Orderly Room where I would hang out occasionally there was a rack of magazines and recruiting material and stuff like that. Well, there was a magazine-size pamphlet, gray background, had the First Captain at West Point standing on the Plain with the Chapel behind him, and the barracks, you know. And I was probably seventh or eighth grade, something like that.

I still have that magazine, and it was really the thing that, you know, going through that, and sitting there and looking at it, I took it home, and I said, â€œHey, maybe this is where I want to go.â€ And by the ninth or tenth grade, I had kind of set out to see if I could do it.

Interviewer:

Yes sir. And sir, you got in, and how was your Cadet experience?

GEN Curtis Scaparrotti:

It was challenging for me. I mean particularly the first year. Pretty tough. I went to a small school in southeastern Ohio - a very good school, but - for instance, I joke, but in math you usually did - we did about two weeks of review, and then started into our math period. And you know, probably halfway through that review period, my first couple weeks of math, I wasnâ€™t reviewing anything; this was new. And so I really struggled my Plebe year particularly in math. I think I was pretty well-prepared by my school in English, but math, I was having a tough time. And so literally, my first two years at West Point I think I was working hard just to develop academically. My last two years I felt like I was beginning to get ahead of it. I was learning how to study, those kind of things. So I saw the four years here as very challenging. Iâ€™m very happy I came, because I reflect - I was accepted at Ohio State University, for instance.

Had I gone to Ohio State, Iâ€™d be a completely different person, â€˜cause this place challenged me to figure out who I could be, and to challenge me to be better than perhaps even I thought I could be, by the nature of the way West Point does things. Had I gone to Ohio State, Iâ€™m sure I wouldâ€™ve probably goofed off more and probably developed less.

Interviewer:

Yes sir. To dovetail onto that, in addition to the academics, what was your biggest

challenge while you were a Cadet at West Point?

GEN Curtis Scaparrotti:

Well, you know, I think I developed physically as well. You know, I was an athlete in high school, but I wasn't one of the standout athletes. I played because at our school you played most sports. Fairly well-rounded, but I wasn't a standout. I wasn't really a starter most of the time; my senior year, that was it. So you know, I came here and it was the other place that challenged me. I got myself in a lot better shape as a Cadet. Actually, better shape than I thought I could ever be in, and that progressed through the four years as well. And I think it prepared me well to go out in a unit like the 82nd and lead, and so I guess what I've said to you about every aspect of being a Cadet was something that moved me forward.

Interviewer:

Yes sir. Sir, the Cadets will be watching this video, and you've had a very successful career, but can you think of a time as a Junior Officer when you either struggled with a mission, or things didn't go as planned, and you had to overcome? And what lessons did you learn from that experience?

GEN Curtis Scaparrotti:

Yeah, yeah. Well, you know, there's a few of those. What I'd like to say up front is I went right into a unit that, you know, the Company Commander was challenged. I mean he was having a very difficult time. In my view, he wasn't a real good Company Commander. West Point, you know, prepares you; really, you get excited. I wanted to go to the 82nd. That was my unit of choice. I was very happy to get there. You know, when I showed up in Alpha Company, 3rd of 325, and I was fired up, the Company Commander wasn't nearly as fired up about being in a Parachute unit as I was, and that was evident right away. And so for me, it was a struggle, 'cause I started out in the unit that it didn't appear that even the Commander was as fired up about doing the job as I was. As I said, he wasn't that good of a leader, and so I had to struggle with my very first unit not being what I had kind of come out of West Point expecting I would find.

And with a Company Commander that I certainly wasn't going to get developed by, necessarily. But I was fortunate; I had an excellent Platoon Sergeant, who understood professionally how to do that, and yet never said a word about the Company Commander. I had an excellent First Sergeant that evidently saw some value in me as a leader, because he would do exceptional things like when the Company Commander was really into my knickers at times - about something I felt was what I ought to be doing - you know, the First Sergeant would kind of get in behind me where he wasn't really seen, and just kind of whisper into my ear without anybody knowing it. 'Lieutenant, you're on track. Just keep moving forward,' you know? And it was good to know that the First Sergeant kind of saw that, and as a young Lieutenant, that probably kept me in the Army and kept me on the right track as well.

The first thing I would tell you is, you know, you've got to rely on your NCOs. Now, certainly some are better than others. I'd been blessed in that particular case with two great NCOs, key in my career. Sergeant Bohannon taught me how to lead; you know, really taught me how to lead soldiers. In our case, we went to the unit before we went to Basic, because in '78 we had about 15 of us that did that, so when I showed up at this unit I hadn't even been through Basic Course yet. So what did Bohannon do? He put me through Basic Course. We met about every other morning at 4:30 in the morning, and he had a task for me that day. And so it might be assembly and disassembly M60 machine gun, but he would work with that in the mornings until the point he knew I was at least as good as our own Gunners. He took me out on land nav himself on weekends. Everything that I had - he basically said, 'Look, if you'll work hard, Lieutenant, you will never do anything in front of this Platoon you haven't done to standard for me first.' And in the course of, you know, that summer, I went through RTPS, et cetera, Squad, Platoon, Company, and Battalion. And by the time I went to Basic, I felt like, you know, I

was really proficient. I wasn't quite sure why I was going to Basic now, you know, so I mean I was very fortunate. The first thing is, you know, we've got a great NCO Corps, and if you'll listen and learn as an Officer at whatever level, you know, it's going to pay off for you. The other one is in adverse conditions, do the right thing. What they teach you here at West Point. And it takes an edge, it takes some conviction, and it takes risk, but risk you've got to be willing to take, because that's what's expected of you; and I had to learn that early, too.

Interviewer:

Yes sir. Your Platoon Sergeant must've - training you like that must've given you the confidence to be a strong leader in front of your soldiers there.

GEN Curtis Scaparrotti:

He did. Yeah, he did. And we took Best Platoon in the Battalion, and it wasn't because of the Lieutenant. It was because of the Sergeant that trained the Lieutenant, gave me the confidence and the Platoon the confidence I could lead them.

Interviewer:

Yes sir.

GEN Curtis Scaparrotti:

It was a remarkable thing for me, and I tell people about that to this day, 'cause it got me off on the right foot.

Interviewer:

Sir, during the mid-90s, you participated in several peacekeeping operations as a Battalion Commander. Could you briefly describe some of the peacekeeping operations you engaged in during that time?

GEN Curtis Scaparrotti:

Yeah. Support Hope was, you know, units in Zaire and Rwanda. It was interesting to me because I was a brand-new Battalion Commander. I think I'd been in command maybe four or five weeks, and the mission came down, very little notice, to go there and essentially provide security, so that NGOs could, you know, stop the Grim Reaper. I mean literally try and put an end to the disease and destruction that was going on there. As you know, in Rwanda, they had had the killings there, and so that was still very much a part of the environment for the part of my unit that was there as well. So you had a different environment in each place, but it was both very challenging, and there was a real security threat. Now, what I learned there was that we really didn't get great guidance. We didn't get a very clear picture of what it is we were moving into.

What we should expect, and not a very precise mission statement either. What I was blessed with was a great Brigade Commander, Jim McDonough, who because of that lack, had enough experience to say, "Okay, here's the way we're going to shape this. Let's think about what we know about this problem set, and what do we think we need." And so between he and I, really worked our way through that, prepared the unit as best we could, and went off and did it. But that's the first place that I learned that, one, you're not always going to get everything you need. You've got to be prepared to take that blank sheet of paper, do your own analysis, design a plan, and then know how to execute it. And then when you get on the ground, have the agility to understand it and change.

It was an environment where I found that wherever there's chaos, and you know the structure of, you know, of a government is broken down, bad people come there, and I met lots of them. I mean people that came simply to take advantage of that situation.

You've got to be aware of that as a leader in those environments. You've got to look out for it, and you've also got to protect your troops from it. Because they, too, will take advantage of your troops, and affect that value set and the way they conduct themselves; how they think about things in those kinds of environments. In this case, I had Companies distributed in different places, so you had a young Captain out there doing the best he could do. But as a Battalion Commander, I had to get out frequently, do battlefield circulation.

Make sure that I knew the environment that they were in, and be there long enough to know that they were getting it right, and give some good leadership and guidance to them. I did okay. I wouldn't write myself as having done great as a Battalion Commander in that incident, but it set me up for what were much tougher missions in Bosnia in my next one, and then Liberia NEO as a Battalion Commander in that same Battalion. The lessons I learned in Zaire and Rwanda paid off big-time preparing troops for Bosnia, and particularly Liberia, which were much more challenging.

Interviewer:

Yes sir. Why were those more challenging environments?

GEN Curtis Scaparrotti:

Bosnia, we literally went into Bosnia, our Parachute unit went in and secured Tuzla; we were the first combat unit into the area. First Armored Division had not made the river crossing on time; we went in anyway, and so we were the first ones in. We secured the airfield, and then we were used to begin reconnaissance and patrols to determine the position of the two warring factions. And you had to begin to separate those warring factions; you had to work with both sides of them. And you had to maneuver battle space that was contentious, and in many places, mined, or just from the result of their war, dangerous places. And you know it's one of those places you go, you begin to learn, and then you begin how to conduct a mission and protect your troops at the same time. So I went in there, we really started doing things that we didn't think we would be doing. Because First Armored wasn't there, but there were things that needed to be done, and we essentially became a CAV Troop for them -

Interviewer:

Yes sir.

GEN Curtis Scaparrotti:

You know, as a Parachute unit. We did a lot more than just secure that airfield, and it was a great mission.

Interviewer:

So you dropped in between two warring factions, with a Battalion, and had to keep these guys, your soldiers, with the mindset of a peacekeeping operation, while keeping two warring factions apart.

GEN Curtis Scaparrotti:

Right; yeah. You know, we flew in.

Interviewer:

Yes sir.

GEN Curtis Scaparrotti:

We landed in Tuzla, established that security, and then we moved out to their locations where they were facing each other, and essentially I worked with both sides to separate those forces, begin to pull their forces back. We then began to clear the roads, to open those areas for the populace to be able to have some movement. All of those things were challenging. They were new at the time. Some of the things I've never done. You know, you learn a lot of lessons. One, you figure out how to do it, but you also find out the American soldier is very ingenious. Our engineers did great work there, but they did a lot of things that many of the soldiers told me, "I never thought I'd be doing this."

Interviewer:

Yes sir.

GEN Curtis Scaparrotti:

Yeah.

Interviewer:

So in a case like that, how do you keep your soldiers sharp while conducting peacekeeping operations, when they joined the military to engage in war-fighting? How do you switch that mindset?

GEN Curtis Scaparrotti:

Well, if you recall, I made one comment about, you know, the American soldiers and the values that we uphold and we stand for. In those kinds of environments, youâ€™ve got to talk to soldiers about what the expectations are of them, individually and as a unit, in terms of upholding international values and what we stand for as an Army. And I found out early there you had to do that, and then enforce discipline. Continue to enforce discipline, including the small things. The small things are what keep them focused on their mission and out of trouble, frankly. You let that start to slide and youâ€™re going to begin to, you know, to have problems. Youâ€™ve got to focus them on training, because even though theyâ€™re not in a combat environment, per se, theyâ€™re in situations where they could get into a dangerous spot quickly. Part of keeping them out of that is being professional, looking professional, and looking like somebody nobody else wants to mess with. And you know, soldiers can tell somebody thatâ€™s proficient and ready.

So since Valley Forge, weâ€™ve trained in combat, and we need to continue to train in combat; so thatâ€™s another way you mitigate risk, you continue to train them. Final thing Iâ€™d say is, you know, I and the Sergeant Major got out to see troops - see them where theyâ€™re at. Make sure theyâ€™re doing the right things. Make sure theyâ€™re maintaining their discipline, theyâ€™re maintaining the right protective standards, patrolling, et cetera, that we all know are fundamentals. And thatâ€™s the other way you help keep them alive: you keep them alert.

Interviewer:

Yes sir. And to touch one more time on how did you get the factions to have buy-in with this?

GEN Curtis Scaparrotti:

Well, you talk to them, and you had to convince them that it was the way they needed to go. But thereâ€™s also places where it was really by force. Early on, there was a point where we needed to open a road and separate the factions. One of the two factions, and I canâ€™t remember which side it was, refused to move, and they actually moved tanks into positions overlooking this road that needed to be cleared, and they needed to move back. So they basically moved up and kind of trumped me, and they kind of said, â€œWeâ€™re here and weâ€™re not moving, and weâ€™ve put our tanks in place.â€ In that particular instance, I and the Three drove up to a point and had a meeting with their Commanders. I laid out my map, and I showed him on the map the location of every one of his tanks that heâ€™d put in location. And I said, â€œHereâ€™s the deal. Youâ€™ve gotâ€ - I donâ€™t remember the exact time; I gave him like an hour. I said, â€œYouâ€™re going to move those tanks out, and youâ€™re going to move them this far back. And if you donâ€™t move them back, then weâ€™re going to take the tanks out.â€

And at about that time, my Three had called in two of our F-15s or F-16s, and they came rockinâ€™ down that valley at a low level, right over our head, right over his units, and then took off, you know, afterburners burning, right up into the sky. We did that purposely, and I basically said, â€œYouâ€™re moving, one way or the other. We can do this the easy way. We can do it the hard way.â€ And they stalled for about 30-40 minutes, never quite sure what they were going to do, but yet they did. They moved. They moved the tanks back, they began to move the units, and then we moved in, and we did it without firing a shot. But it was the strength of the unit presented in front of them, and the fact that I had air cover.

Interviewer:

Yes sir. To back up just one second to Operation Support Hope in Rwanda, did you - you operated some camps, right, for the victims of the genocide?

GEN Curtis Scaparrotti:

Yeah.

Interviewer:

How did your soldiers deal with seeing things like that?

GEN Curtis Scaparrotti:

Well, you know, you had to - one, we prepared them for it, â€˜cause we thought we knew

what we may see. But the second thing is you had to have the discussion with them; you had to talk to them about it. There was a lot of death there. Where we put one of our camps, there was so much refuse of people threw their body parts - it was just nasty. And it was so bad that in order to clear the ground in order to put in a Company camp, we literally decided to take bulldozers, and take about a half a foot of the earth and everything on top of that off, and just shove it far out of the way. Because it was not something you could ask your troops to clean, and it was the only way to put in a camp that we could put troops on. So that's the kind of environment that we were in, in order to just get set in, and then begin to operate; provide security to the NGOs. And then there was in Rwanda, you know, the literally, you know, stacks of bodies.

You know, a lot of death, and a lot of it had been cleared, but people talked to us about it, told us about it. And we had some Australian troops who were there before us, in the worst of it, and talking to them about their experience I think was revealing. I still remember it personally. I'm sure my troops did. But you know, preparing them for that, and then talking to them about it afterwards I think is what we did. Now that you ask about it, I bet you we didn't do nearly as good a job as we've done in the wars since that I've been a part of, because we were - you know, at that time, you know, in the '90s, we just didn't have the experience we have today on the impact of the soldier, environments like that. And we didn't have the resources that we have today to deal with that, and ensure that we can follow up with trained counselors with our soldiers to ensure that they've come through this okay.

Interviewer:

Yes sir. Now sir, to switch gears a little bit, you served as both a TAC Officer here at West Point, and as Commandant of Cadets. What changes did you observe in the Corps in the roughly 20 years between those two experiences?

GEN Curtis Scaparrotti:

First of all, when I came in as a TAC, what struck me was that, you know, the Corps was quite a bit like it was when I left, but they were already starting to make the transition in leadership, and I think it was for the good. That was the leading edge of positive leadership, understanding human dynamics, understanding how you motivate people not by fear, but by good leadership. But it was still the leading edge of it. You know, by the time I was the COM, we'd made that transition. West Point was a different place in terms of how we taught leadership. We taught it by modeling it and how to do it, and we expected proper leadership of Cadets as they came through the ranks. When I was a TAC, you primarily focused on the Firsties. By the time I was the COM, from, you know, Plebe year through, you progressed in your leadership responsibilities.

And people evaluated you in that responsibility, both peers, Instructors, and Tactical Officers. So I think there was a big advance in terms of the way we went about teaching leadership to Cadets between my TAC time and my COM time. The other thing I would tell you is that throughout those years, the academic challenge has progressed. You know, from the time that I was a Cadet in '78 to when I was a TAC in '85, I think that West Point, to me, had become more difficult academically, and that was absolutely the case by the time I was a Commandant, in an even bigger shift. You know, we'd gone to majors. The Cadets were very bright. And the demands on their time in terms of academic achievement was, I thought as a COM, pretty tough. Particularly in the other things that we demanded of them as a well-rounded leader, physically, et cetera.

Interviewer:

Yes sir.

GEN Curtis Scaparrotti:

So I think there's a great deal of change, but all for the good - all for the good.

Interviewer:

Yes sir. What was your number one goal when you were a Commandant, and would you still keep that as your goal today?

GEN Curtis Scaparrotti:

You know, when I came in as the COM, one of the things I first wanted to do is really to make an assessment, you know, of this portion of the Academy that I was responsible for. And I had to do that quickly, because you know I had two years, and I wanted to make the most of that two years. The first thing, though, that I had to do when I looked at that was how do we train Cadets and prepare them to be leaders in combat? I had just come out of Iraq. It was '04, we had just finished the first year in Iraq, and what I saw was, particularly in the summer, training that wasn't advanced a lot more from when I was a Cadet. For instance, pup tents - really? Didn't see a pup tent in Iraq. Not sure we even issue them anymore. So you know, you had to go through okay, how are we doing summer training, and what is it they really need to prepare them, particularly for the Firsties, who in another year are going to be in combat, probably?

So the first thing was how do we change the summer training, and I looked at that hard, and then over those two years began to change Buckner. You know, establishing it as a COP. Maintaining their weapons with them all the time, as opposed to putting them in the Arms Room every night. All those things that we had to begin to do, 'cause that's what they're going to do in the field in our Army today. And I think we made great progress there, and then you know Bob Caslen just took it to another label, I think, but he continued that as he came in behind me. That was really the first one. Now, the second one was I took a look at the organization, the Commandants organization, and was it established in a way that we could gain continuity, 'cause COMs go quickly by the nature of the way we do it. I think it's right to do it that way, continue to bring people right out of command into the Commandant's position. But we also had to establish an organization that helped maintain some continuity as you went through that; that knew where I began, what my goals were, and how they would pick it up and carry on after me. So we did some reorganization, and yeah, I think I did have some success.

What I set out to do, took two years to get those changes made organizationally in the Army, so I actually put it in place for Bob Caslen to pick up, and then actually have the people to begin to work with that organization in a different way. So that's one of the things I wanted to do; we were able to do it. In DMI, for instance, we also changed kind of the way that we instructed, in order to get better-prepared graduates for the Army they were going into. We changed how we taught the Firsties. You know, if you remember, that year we decided that Platoon Sergeants here, NCOs, taught their last six months in DMI, because that's who they're going to have a relationship with as they immediately go into a Force's yellow tent. We decided to start exploring, you know, a concentration or a major in Military Science, which was later put into place; we began that during my time.

So I felt like one of the great things about being the COM is it's one of the few times there's a senior leader in the Army, when you go into a unit and into an organization, that doesn't have a lot of turbulence and a lot of change. Units have that. West Point has a certain structure in the academic year that you can count on, and because of that you get some stability, and it allows you as a senior executive leader to actually make a two-year plan and work through it, without only the changes you make because of what you learn, but not because of the unexpected, so much. And as I look back on it, that's one of the things I most enjoyed about it.

Interviewer:

Yes sir. Now sir, you served in Afghanistan twice. Once as a Commander of the 82nd Airborne in RC East, and then as the ISAF Commander. How would you characterize the progress while you were in Afghanistan and since?

GEN Curtis Scaparrotti:

Yeah. Well, first of all, when I took over in the 82nd and we went in there as an RC East, it was the beginning of the surge. I mean essentially, McChrystal took over three or four weeks after I took over the 82nd in the East, so we knew that we had, you know, that we had to develop a new plan, and General McChrystal went after that. I was fortunate as a

Division Commander to have input into that. It was an exciting time. We had done a lot of work in Afghanistan. We believed we were going to get the resources we needed, so we had to be serious about what we needed. So I played a role in RC East and what I would see coming in the year that I was there. I think we made great progress in the year that I was there. For instance, I started with about 35 civilians. I had about 200 and maybe 20, and a senior civilian, equivalent to my rank, as my, you know, as my civilian partner. And I think we established an inter agency group there that was a model, frankly. And we worked as an inter agency group down through the 82nd into those provinces quite well. Took some time to develop that, but I think we developed whatâ€™s a model for something in the future thatâ€™ll work well. We didnâ€™t get all the resources we thought we would get, or hoped we would get, in that year. I had to turn it over to those who come behind me, but it was moving forward. Now, what was interesting, I was out a year, prepared First Corps, came back as the Operational Commander in IJC. So with a yearâ€™s break, I got to see, okay, where did we go in this over that two-year period? We didnâ€™t get all the forces we had asked for, but we had found ways to fill the gap and keep moving forward. What was disappointing to me was my first task was bring the troops down by 10,000 by the end of that first summer.

And I donâ€™t remember the exact numbers, but the full gamut by that, you know, winter, by December or so. So my first task was how do I continue this mission, continue to make progress, and yet reduce my troops, reduce the footprint across Afghanistan, and continue to provide the security thatâ€™s needed to reduce risk at our soldiers and Afghans, and that was a tough problem set. How are we doing today? Frankly, I think that had we stayed longer with a little more force, weâ€™d be in good shape, â€™cause I think the plan we had actually was working, and we had the great ability to nest those plans and actually carry them on between the rotations. I know in RC East we did, â€™cause I talked, obviously, to the one I turned over to and the one or two that took over while I was IJC Commander. And we literally didnâ€™t make great changes. We made adjustments based on the conditions we found and the progress we were making, but we didnâ€™t reinvent the wheel. And I think over the long-term, it was a successful plan, one that could work. The danger we have today is we brought our forces out probably too fast, maybe too small. Iâ€™m heartened to see the President just made the decision to keep 5,000 there now for another year. I hope itâ€™s enough to give the Afghans the security they need and the confidence they need to keep moving forward, because they do have the ability to make this country what they want it to be, if we stay there long enough in enough strength to help them.

Interviewer:

Yes sir. So what is the biggest obstacle to progress, then, in Afghanistan?

GEN Curtis Scaparrotti:

I think that probably it is the divisions that they have, ethnically, and probably to a certain extent tribally. And then the second part of that may be even more important is the leadership. That has to get beyond, you know, their personal ethnic background, and really begin to develop trust between the divisions in Afghanistan and work for the people. Because as much as we worked - and I know some of those leaders very well, and some I know well enough to call a friend, in some cases - and they still have to get beyond that. Iâ€™m not sure that the seniors will totally be able to get beyond it, but theyâ€™ve got a younger generation I believe can, if they have the guts to stand up and take on that responsibility.

Iâ€™m hopeful they will. I think, you know, that schoolâ€™s still out as opposed to whether or not thatâ€™s really going to happen. Weâ€™ll have to wait and see.

Interviewer:

Yes sir. Sir, youâ€™re the current Commander of the United Nations Command in the Republic of Korea, and the U.S. Combined Forces Command in U.S. Forces Korea. What is your biggest concern being stationed over in that area of the world?



GEN Curtis Scaparrotti:

It's a miscalculation. You know, you've got an adversary there, the K.J.U., who is very unpredictable. He's brash. He believes that he can control conflict, so he uses coercion and provocation for diplomacy in order to coerce what he, you know, his objectives, short-term as they may be. He's done that in the time, several times in the time that I've been the Commander over two years, with a belief I think personally that he believes that he can in fact create some violence and control it. And I think we know, and we know from experience, that that's a dangerous business. In the long run, it's false. So I'm not concerned about an attack from the North to take the South. I'm concerned about some provocation that South Korea reacts to, there's a miscalculation on one or both sides, and now we're into an escalation at a rapid pace. And with the size of those forces, the capabilities they have, in very close proximity, that would be a very serious problem.

Interviewer:

Yes sir, with kind of the hair trigger type of idea, right?

GEN Curtis Scaparrotti:

Yeah. Yeah, well, I mean again, you know, he believes that he can control conflict. He has force to do a great deal of harm. This is not an Afghanistan or Iraq. This is two adversaries with very modern weapons systems - the North, who has nuclear capability. They have a very large missile capability, a very large Special Operations capability, and a very large Artillery capability, which ranges Seoul, the capital of South Korea. And so he has the ability to inflict some real damage. And you know, we have to be vigilant. We have to be ready, so that we deter any notion that he has that he could do that to his own advantage.

Interviewer:

Yes sir. Sir, the final question for you: what is the one piece of advice you'd give Cadets as they complete their West Point experience?

GEN Curtis Scaparrotti:

Continue to study. Continue to study human nature, and the human dimension, which is what our Army's about. And you know, prepare yourself to be your best on the worst of days. That's your challenge.

Interviewer:

Thank you very much, sir. It's been an honor -

GEN Curtis Scaparrotti:

Thank you.

Interviewer:

And a privilege to have you here at the Center for Oral History.

GEN Curtis Scaparrotti:

Thank you. I've enjoyed it. Hopefully it'll be helpful at some point, eh?

Interviewer:

Yes sir.

GEN Curtis Scaparrotti:

Thank you.