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UNCLASSIFIED PHNOMPENH 000974/01

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UNCLAS SECTION 01 OF 02 PHNOM PENH 00974

SERIAL: IIR 6 024 CBAJMR04 92

COUNTRY: CAMBODIA (CF)

SUBJ: IIR 6 024 CBAJMR04/LIVE SIGHTING  
INVESTIGATION-SAANG DISTRICTWARNING: THIS IS AN INFORMATION REPORT, NOT  
FINALLY EVALUATED INTELLIGENCE. REPORT IS  
UNCLASSIFIED.

DOI: 920429

REQS: P-VOP-2430-03-90

SOURCE: SAANG DISTRICT GOVERNMENT, POLICE, AND  
MILITARY OFFICIALS, PLUS THREE LOCAL VILLAGERS. NAMES  
OF THESE INDIVIDUALS WILL APPEAR IN TEXT.

SUMMARY: THIS IS A STONY BEACH REPORT. THE FOLLOWING IS A  
DETAILED SUMMARY OF THE RESULTS OF THE LIVE SIGHTING  
INVESTIGATION CONDUCTED IN SAANG DISTRICT ON 28 APRIL 1992.  
THE CASE INVOLVED THE REPORT OF FIVE CAUCASIAN PRISONERS,  
SAID TO BE AMERICANS, WHO WERE ALLEGEDLY INCARCERATED IN THE  
SAANG DISTRICT PRISON, KANDAL PROVINCE, CAMBODIA, DURING  
1990. LOCAL MILITARY AND CIVILIAN OFFICIALS, AS WELL AS THE  
CHIEF OF THE DISTRICT POLICE AND LOCAL VILLAGERS WERE  
INTERVIEWED DURING THE INVESTIGATION. IN ADDITION, THE  
FACILITY IN QUESTION (WHICH WAS CLOSED IN 1991 AND REOPENED  
AS A SCHOOL) WAS VISITED BY THE ISI, AS WAS THE DISTRICT  
JAIL WHICH WAS LOCATED RIGHT ACROSS THE HIGHWAY. CONTRARY TO  
THE SOURCE'S CLAIM, THE EVIDENCE GATHERED, BOTH FROM THE  
ACTUAL INVESTIGATION AND INFORMATION COLLECTED FROM  
ADDITIONAL SOURCES AND RECORDS, FAILS TO SUBSTANTIATE THE  
ALLEGED LIVE SIGHTING CLAIM. RECOMMEND THIS CASE BE CLOSED  
OUT AND PRESENTED TO THE REVIEW PANEL AS A FABRICATION.

TEXT:

1. ON 29 APRIL 1992, A LIVE SIGHTING INVESTIGATION WAS  
CONDUCTED INTO THE ALLEGED INCARCERATION OF FIVE CAUCASIANS  
IN A PRISON FACILITY IN SAANG DISTRICT, KANDAL PROVINCE,  
CAMBODIA DURING 1990. THE SOURCE REPORTED BEING TOLD BY  
LOCAL VILLAGERS THAT THE CAUCASIANS WERE AMERICAN. THE  
INVESTIGATIVE TEAM WAS COMPRISED OF ALIAN MICHAELS, THE LIVE  
SIGHTING INVESTIGATOR (LSI); MC NUON SARATH, VICE MINISTER  
OF THE STATE OF CAMBODIA (SOC) MINISTRY OF INTERIOR (MOI);  
AND, VANLY PHIROUN, SOC MINISTRY OF FOREIGN AFFAIRS (MFA)

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INTEPRETER.

2. THE TEAM PROCEEDED FROM PHNOM PENH TO SAANG DISTRICT  
WHERE A MEETING WAS HELD WITH LOCAL OFFICIALS AT THE  
DISTRICT HEADQUARTERS BUILDING. IN ADDITION TO THE  
INVESTIGATIVE TEAM, THE FOLLOWING DISTRICT PERSONNEL WERE  
ALSO IN ATTENDANCE: PROM SAMEUT, VICE CHAIRMAN OF SAANG  
DISTRICT; CHEA VANHA, DIRECTOR OF POLICE FOR SAANG  
DISTRICT; AND LANH YOU, CHAIRMAN OF DISTRICT MILITARY  
AFFAIRS. PROM SAMEUT HAS RESIDED IN SAANG SINCE 1976 AND  
SERVED IN HIS OFFICIAL CAPACITY AS VICE CHAIRMAN FOR THE  
PAST SEVEN YEARS. CHEA VANHA HAS WORKED AS A POLICE  
OFFICIAL IN THE DISTRICT SINCE 1960.

3. THE LSI PRESENTED A BRIEF SYNOPSIS OF THE CASE TO THE  
GROUP AND THEN OUTLINED THE REQUIREMENTS THAT NEEDED TO BE  
SATISFIED IN ORDER TO SUCCESSFULLY ACCOMPLISH THE  
INVESTIGATION. THESE INCLUDED AN INTERVIEW OF THE LOCAL  
OFFICIALS IN ATTENDANCE, A VISIT TO THE PRISON, AND  
ADDITIONAL INTERVIEWS OF LOCAL VILLAGERS WHO RESIDED IN  
CLOSE PROXIMITY TO THE FACILITY. MC NUON SARATH AND THE  
THREE LOCAL OFFICIALS AGREED THAT ALL OF THESE REQUIREMENTS  
COULD BE EASILY ADDRESSED AS WELL AS ANY OTHER THAT MIGHT  
ARISE DURING THE INVESTIGATION. THE SOC SIDE STRESSED THE  
IMPORTANCE OF CLOSE COOPERATION WITH THEIR AMERICAN  
COUNTERPARTS ON THE POW-MIA AND LIVE SIGHTING ISSUES.

4. THE LSI WAS INFORMED THAT THE PRISON IN QUESTION  
ORIGINALLY SERVED AS A SCHOOL DURING THE SIHANOUK ERA. UPON  
THEIR ASSUMPTION OF POWER, THE KHMER ROUGE (KR) TURNED THE  
FACILITY INTO A PRISON. WHEN THE KR WAS CUSTODIAN, WITH THE  
HELP OF THE VIETNAMESE (AN EMPHASIS WAS PLACED ON THE FACT  
THAT VIETNAM WAS THE ONLY COUNTRY TO COME TO THE RESCUE OF  
THE CAMBODIAN PEOPLE DURING A TIME OF LIFE NEED), THE  
CAMBODIAN GOVERNMENT CONTINUED TO USE THE FACILITY AS A  
PRISON UNDER THE JURISDICTION OF THE MINISTRY OF DEFENSE  
(MOD). THE SOC CLOSED THE FACILITY NEAR THE END OF 1991.  
FACT THAT HE VISITED IT OFTEN, HE WOULD HAVE KNOWN ABOUT THE  
PRESENCE OF FOREIGN PRISONERS. HE STATED THAT THERE WERE NO  
CAUCASIAN PRISONERS INCARCERATED THERE.

9. THE LSI THEN REQUESTED TO VISIT THE PRISON. SINCE IT  
WAS ONLY ABOUT 100 YARDS FROM THE DISTRICT HEADQUARTERS  
BUILDING, THE LSI, ACCOMPANIED BY POLICE CHIEF VANHA AND

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THE MFA INTERPRETER, WALKED TO THE FACILITY. THE COMPOUND WAS LOCATED RIGHT ALONGSIDE THE MAIN ROAD THAT WENT THROUGH SAANG. THE BUILDING THAT SERVED AS THE ACTUAL PRISON WAS ONLY ABOUT 30 YARDS FROM THE ROAD AND EASILY VISIBLE SINCE THERE WAS NO WALL OR OTHER IMPEDIMENT TO OBSTRUCT ONE'S VIEW. ANYONE TRAVELING ALONG THIS ROAD COULD EASILY OBSERVE ACTIVITY IN THE COMPOUND TO INCLUDE ANY TYPE ACTIVITIES UNDERTAKEN BY THE INMATES IN THE ADJACENT FIELDS AND GARDENS. IN FACT, IF ONE WERE TO STAND OUTSIDE THE COMPOUND FOR A FEW MINUTES AND CONTEMPLATE (A LOOKING AT THE PRISON BUILDING ITSELF, ONE COULD SEE INTO MOST OF THE CELLS AND, IN THE OPINION OF THE LSI, BE ABLE TO DISTINGUISH BETWEEN A CAUCASIAN AND AN ORIENTAL PRISONER FROM THAT DISTANCE. ALTHOUGH THE FACILITY HAS BEEN CLOSED FOR A FEW MONTHS, FROM WHAT WAS OBSERVED BY THE LSI, SECURITY AT THIS FACILITY WAS QUITE LAX. THE LSI WAS ALLOWED TO PHOTOGRAPH THE COMPOUND AREA, WHICH INCLUDED THE PRISON BUILDING, THE ADMINISTRATIVE BUILDING, AND THE ADJACENT FIELDS.

10. THE TEAM THEN PROCEEDED TO A LOCATION ABOUT 35 YARDS FROM THE ROAD FROM THE MAIN COMPOUND ENTRANCE. AT THIS LOCATION BEGAN THE CONCENTRATION OF VILLAGE HUTS AND ROADSIDE VENDORS. THE FIRST VILLAGER INTERVIEWED WAS MR PFC. HE HAS RESIDED IN SAANG SINCE 1979. HE REPORTED THAT HE HAS NEVER SEEN NOR HEARD OF ANY CAUCASIANS IMPRISONED IN SAANG. HE STATED THAT HE TRAVELS PAST THE COMPOUND ON A NEAR DAILY BASIS AND HE WOULD HAVE NOTICED CAUCASIANS IN THE FACILITY. THE NEXT INDIVIDUAL INTERVIEWED WAS MR KHEM ENG, A 47 YOA RESIDENT OF SAANG SINCE BIRTH. HE ALSO STATED THAT HE HAS NEVER SEEN NOR HEARD OF ANY CAUCASIANS AT THE PRISON. LIKHWIS, CHHAP YA, A RESIDENT OF THE VILLAGE SINCE 1979, REPORTED THE SAME THING. AT EACH OF THE LOCATIONS WHERE THESE THREE INTERVIEWS WERE CONDUCTED, OTHER VILLAGERS CURIOUS ABOUT THE PRESENCE OF A FOREIGNER BEGAN TO MILL ABOUT. WHEN THEY HEARD THE INTERPRETER ASK THE QUESTION ABOUT THE PRESENCE OF FOREIGN PRISONER IN SAANG, MOST EITHER SHOOK THEIR HEAD OR LAUGHED IN DISBELIEF.

11. LSI COMMENT: FULL COOPERATION WAS RENDERED BY THE CAMBODIAN AUTHORITIES BOTH ON THE NATIONAL AND DISTRICT LEVELS. ACCESS TO ALL AREAS REQUESTED AND PERMISSION TO INTERVIEW ANY SOURCES WERE GRANTED WITHOUT HESITATION. THE CAMBOLIANS SEEMED SOMEWHAT BEWILDERED THAT THE AMERICAN SIDE COULD ATTACH ANY CREDIBILITY TO SUCH AN OUTLANDISH REPORT AND WANT TO ACTUALLY INVESTIGATE IT. THE LSI EMPHASIZED THAT ALL FIRSTHAND LIVE SIGHTING REPORTS MUST BE FULLY INVESTIGATED SO AS TO ENSURE THE AMERICAN PUBLIC AND GOVERNMENT THAT EVERY CONCEIVABLE MEASURE IS UNDERTAKEN TO RESOLVE THE PRISONER ISSUE. THE SEC OFFICIALS STATED THAT THEY UNDERSTOOD THE IMPORTANCE ATTACHED TO THIS ISSUE AND WOULD DO ANYTHING POSSIBLE TO ASSIST IN THIS EFFORT.

12. THE LOCATION OF THE FACILITY, ITS PROXIMITY TO A HIGHLY TRAVELED ROUTE BETWEEN PHNOM PENH AND AREAS SOUTH IN KANDAL PROVINCE, ITS ACCESSIBILITY, AND THE LACK OF STRINGENT SECURITY BOTH IN THE PHYSICAL AND PRECAUTIONARY SENSE, WOULD PRECLUDE THE SELECTION OF THE SAANG DISTRICT PRISON AS PLACE TO INCARCERATE AMERICAN PRISONERS, ESPECIALLY POWS.

//IPSP: PG 2430//.

//COMSOBJ: 521//.

PROJ: 6999-10.

COLL:

INSTR: US: NO.

PREP: ALLAN MICHAELS

ENCL: NONE

ACQ: 920429, SAANG DISTRICT, KANDAL PROVINCE, CAMBODIA

DISSEM: FIELD: AMEMBASSY BANGKOK (AMB, DCM, POL,

- SA, DA110, EX/A, JCRC).

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