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ADMINISTRATIVE MESSAGE

ROUTINE

R 120032Z OCT 93 ZYB PSN 784161P27

FM CDR JTF-FA HONOLULU HI//J2//

TO SECDEF WASHINGTON DC//USDP:RSA//

INFO WHITE HOUSE NATIONAL SECURITY COUNCIL WASH DC
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SUBJ/INTERVIEW OF REQUESTED SOURCE, LE NGHIA SY//

REF/A/FAX/CJTFFA DET ONE/10CT93//
THE FOLLOWING MESSAGE IS A VERBATIM TRANSCRIPTION OF AN ORAL HISTORY PROJECT FIELD REPORT//

RMKS/1. BACKGROUND. ON 13 SEPTEMBER 1993, A JOINT U.S./VIETNAM ORAL HISTORY PROGRAM INTERVIEW TEAM INTERVIEWED RETIRED SENIOR COLONEL (SRCOL) LE NGHIA SY, A 70 YOA RESIDENT OF 90/88E NGUYEN DINH CHIEU STREET, DISTRICT 1, HO CHI MINH CITY (HCMC). SRCOL SY IS THE FORMER DEPUTY DIRECTOR OF THE GROUP 559 POLITICAL DEPARTMENT AND CURRENTLY THE DEPUTY CHAIRMAN OF THE DISTRICT 1, HCMC CHAPTER OF THE NATIONAL VIETNAM VETERAN'S ASSOCIATION. THE JOINT TEAM MET AT THE EXTERNAL RELATIONS OFFICE, 6 THAI VAN LUNG STREET, DISTRICT 1, HCMC, TO INTERVIEW SRCOL SY, LISTED IN REFERENCE AS A POTENTIAL SOURCE OF INFORMATION CONCERNING U.S. PERSONNEL MISSING IN ACTION (MIA) IN VIETNAM. THE U.S. CONTINGENT CONSISTED OF MR. [redacted]. DET 2 CASUALTY RESOLUTION SPECIALIST, AND SGT [redacted], JTF-FA ANALYST/LINGUIST. THE VIETNAMESE CENTRAL GOVERNMENT CONSISTED OF LTC LE KY, MINISTRY OF DEFENSE AND MR. NGUYEN VAN THANG LOI, MINISTRY OF INTERIOR. OTHER PERSONNEL ATTENDING THIS INTERVIEW WERE MR. LE KIM LAM, HCMC MIA TEAM CHIEF; MR. HA, HCMC PUBLIC SECURITY SERVICE REPRESENTATIVE;

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AND PAVN TRAN VAN TAN, MILITARY REGION SEVEN (MR7) HEADQUARTERS REPRESENTATIVE.

2. SUMMARY. THE SOURCE, SRCOL LE NGHIA SY, PROVIDED EYEWITNESS ACCOUNTS OF TWO INCIDENTS OF U.S. AIRCRAFT SHOOTDOWNS, ONE OF WHICH INVOLVED THE CAPTURE OF A U.S. PILOT IN OCTOBER OR NOVEMBER OF 1967. THE FIRST INCIDENT INVOLVED AN RF-4C HIT BY AAA FIRE 18/5/1540 THAT CRASHED IN THE VICINITY OF HUONG DO VILLAGE, HUONG KHE DISTRICT, HA TINH PROVINCE. THE PILOT WAS CAPTURED ALIVE, BUT No Cor: THE SOURCE HAD NO INFORMATION REGARDING THE ULTIMATE FATE OF THE PILOT. THE SECOND INCIDENT OCCURRED IN DECEMBER OF 1970, AND INVOLVED THE SHOOTDOWN OF AN AC-130 IN QUANG TRI PROVINCE AT AN UNSPECIFIED POINT NEAR ROUTE 9 SOUTHWEST OF KHE SANH. ACCORDING TO SRCOL SY, THIS INCIDENT HAD NO SURVIVORS AND NO REMAINS RECOVERED. NEITHER INCIDENT, AS DESCRIBED BY THE SOURCE, CAN BE CORRELATED TO ANY MIA CASE AT THIS TIME. THE SOURCE CLAIMED NO KNOWLEDGE OF U.S PERSONNEL, LIVING FREELY OR AGAINST THEIR WILL, IN VIETNAM SINCE 1973.

3. DETAILS. AFTER INTRODUCTORY STATEMENTS BY THE JOINT TEAM, THE SOURCE PROVIDED THE FOLLOWING INFORMATION:

A. SRCOL LE NGHIA SY (LEEE NGHIAX SYX) BEGAN HIS MILITARY CAREER IN 1946, ALTHOUGH HE SAID HE HAD ACTUALLY RECEIVED THE RANK OF RECRUIT ON 22 DECEMBER 1944. HE SAID THAT IN 1956 HE BEGAN SERVICE AS AN OFFICER BUT IT WAS NOT UNTIL 1958 THAT THE SERVICE ACTUALLY ASSIGNED RANKS. IN 1958, ASSIGNED THE RANK OF LIEUTENANT COLONEL, HE WAS SENT TO THE COMMAND STAFF OF GROUP 559. HE CONTINUED TO SERVE IN GROUP 559 THROUGHOUT THE WAR, WAS EVENTUALLY ELEVATED TO DEPUTY CHIEF OF THE POLITICAL OFFICE, AND RETIRED AS A SENIOR COLONEL IN 1973. SRCOL SY SAID THAT DURING THE WAR, AS THE DEPUTY CHIEF OF THE POLITICAL OFFICE, HE WAS AWARE OF THE ACTIVITIES OF MANY DIFFERENT LOWER ECHELON COMMAND UNITS FROM THE NORTH TO SOUTH OF VIETNAM, AS WELL AS IN LAOS AND CAMBODIA. HE SAID THAT DUE TO HIS POSITION HE WAS AWARE OF THE GENERAL CIRCUMSTANCES OF SOME INCIDENTS IN WHICH U.S. PERSONNEL MAY HAVE BEEN KILLED OR CAPTURED BUT THAT THE UNITS HAD NO MEANS OF KEEPING ACCURATE RECORDS. SRCOL SY EXPLAINED THAT THERE WERE NO TAPE RECORDERS, AND IN SOME INSTANCES NO PAPER. HE RECALLED WITNESSING TWO INCIDENTS DURING THE WAR IN WHICH U.S. AIRCRAFT WERE SHOT DOWN.

B. THE FIRST INCIDENT TOOK PLACE IN OCTOBER OR NOVEMBER OF 1967, DURING THE RAINY SEASON. SRCOL SY AND OTHERS FROM HIS UNIT HAD BEEN DEPLOYED TO THE HUONG KHE DISTRICT, HA TINH PROVINCE SEGMENT OF THE HO CHI MINH TRAIL FOR SIX OR SEVEN MONTHS THAT YEAR. SRCOL SY SAID HE KNEW THAT THIS INCIDENT OCCURRED DURING THE RAINY SEASON BECAUSE HEAVY RAINS HAD TURNED ALL OF THE SMALL STREAMS INTO RIVERS. FOR GROUP 559, HE SAID THAT IT WAS STILL RELATIVELY EARLY IN THE WAR, AND HE WAS WITH A CELL OF CADRE PREPARING TO

FORM A UNIT FOR A DRY SEASON CAMPAIGN. HE SAID PREPARATION ACTIVITIES WERE UNDERWAY ON BOTH SIDES OF THE VIETNAM-LAOS BORDER IN THE AREA NEAR THE PROVINCIAL BOUNDARIES OF QUANG BINH AND HA TINH. DUE TO LACK OF COMPASSES, SRCOL SY SAID HE COULD NOT BE SURE ON ANY GIVEN DAY WHETHER HE WAS IN LAOS OR VIETNAM, OR WHETHER HE WAS IN THE OPERATIONS AREA OF MILITARY REGION FOUR (MR4) OR GROUP 559. HE COULD NOT RECALL WHICH DAY THIS INCIDENT OCCURRED, BUT AT ABOUT 1600 HOURS, HE OBSERVED AN OV-10 FLY OVER HIS POSITION, FOLLOWED SOON THEREAFTER BY TWO F-105'S AND TWO RF-4C'S ON A STRIKE MISSION AGAINST THE FORCES CONCENTRATED IN THAT AREA. HE BELIEVED THE OV-10 SPOTTED A TARGET OF OPPORTUNITY AND CALLED IN THE INFORMATION FOR AN AIR STRIKE. DUE TO THE HEAVY CONCENTRATION OF GROUND FORCES IN THE AREA, DURING THE SUBSEQUENT ATTACK, ONE OF THE F-4'S WAS HIT BY AN UNSPECIFIED AAA UNIT, CAUGHT FIRE, AND WENT DOWN IN THE VICINITY OF HUONG DO VILLAGE (UNLOCATED). ONE PILOT EJECTED SAFELY AND PARACHUTED DOWN TO A NEARBY MOUNTAIN TOP. SRCOL SY HEARD THAT LOCAL VILLAGERS CAPTURED THE PILOT WHILE HE WAS SEEKING A SUITABLE LOCATION TO EVADE CAPTURE IN THE VICINITY OF TAN AP VILLAGE (UNLOCATED) JUST BEFORE DARK. BY 2000 HOURS, BLACKOUT PROCEDURES WERE IN EFFECT, AS AN ANTI-AIR RAID MEASURE, AND DUE TO DARKNESS THE GROUND FORCES WERE ONLY AWARE OF THE ONE PILOT. THE VILLAGERS TURNED THE PILOT OVER TO THE MILITIA, AND THE MILITIA DELIVERED THE PW TO THE LOCAL DISTRICT HEADQUARTERS (UNLOCATED). ONCE THERE, MR4 OFFICIALS ASSUMED CONTROL OF THE PILOT. ANTICIPATING THE ARRIVAL OF A U.S. SEARCH AND RESCUE TEAM AND FEARING RETALIATORY AIR STRIKES, THE PAVN SOLDIERS AND MR4 OFFICIALS EVACUATED THE IMMEDIATE AREA IN ORDER TO AVOID THE CONSEQUENCES OF A POTENTIAL SECOND AIR ATTACK THAT NIGHT. SRCOL SY RECALLED HIS UNIT HAD TO CROSS THE NGAN SO (NGAAN SOO) RIVER TO THE NORTH IN ORDER TO EVACUATE THE AREA. HE SAID THAT EVEN THOUGH HE WAS AN EYEWITNESS TO HIS INCIDENT INVOLVING THE CAPTURE OF A U.S. AVIATOR, HE HAD NO SPECIFIC INFORMATION TO CONTRIBUTE WHICH MIGHT DIRECTLY ASSIST IN THE INVESTIGATION OF THIS CASE. SRCOL SY SAID THAT THIS INCIDENT WAS THE CLEAREST INCIDENT IN HIS RECALL BUT THAT HE
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SUBJ/INTERVIEW OF REQUESTED SOURCE, LE NGHIA SY//

RMKS/
COULD PROVIDE NO FURTHER INFORMATION.
C. SRCOL SY COULD PROVIDE NEITHER A NAME NOR A PHYSICAL DESCRIPTION OF THE PILOT. HE EXPLAINED THAT SINCE THE PILOT WAS CAPTURED AT NIGHT AND BLACKOUT PROCEDURES WERE IN EFFECT, HE NEVER HAD A CHANCE TO SEE THE PILOT IN THE LIGHT. SRCOL SY WAS ALSO SOME DISTANCE FROM THE PILOT. SRCOL SY CLAIMED NO KNOWLEDGE

OF THE FATE OF THE PILOT AFTER THE EVACUATION, ADDING THAT THE SHOOTDOWN OCCURRED OVER MR4 TERRITORY; THEREFORE, MR4 OFFICIALS HAD COMPLETE JURISDICTION OVER THE INCIDENT AND RESPONSIBILITY FOR THE PRISONER. SRCOL SY SAID HE REALIZED THE INFORMATION HE PROVIDED WOULD NOT BE OF ANY HELP TO THE JOINT TEAM IN RESOLVING THE CASE, BUT ADDED HE WAS CERTAIN THAT EITHER THE PILOT HAD BEEN REPATRIATED IN 1973 OR HIS REMAINS HAD BEEN TURNED OVER TO THE U.S. SIDE.

D. THE SECOND INCIDENT OCCURRED IN DECEMBER OF 1970 AND INVOLVED THE SHOOTDOWN OF AN AC-130 IN QUANG TRI PROVINCE. HE SAID THAT NO PERSONNEL ABOARD THE AC-130 SURVIVED THE INCIDENT. SRCOL SY WITNESSED THE SHOOTDOWN WHILE HE WAS DEPLOYED TO THE 473RD DIVISION ACCOMPANYING A CONVOY OF TRUCKS TRANSPORTING PAVN TROOPS THROUGH QUANG TRI. AT THAT TIME, ACCORDING TO SRCOL SY, THE U.S. HAD JUST BEGUN USING AC-130'S EQUIPPED WITH ELECTRONICS FOR NIGHT STRIKES AGAINST CONVOYS OF PAVN TRUCKS, AND THIS INCIDENT WAS THE FIRST SHOOTDOWN OF THE NEWLY CONFIGURED AC-130 OVER VIETNAM. DUE TO THE CONSISTENTLY LOW FLIGHT PROFILE USED BY THE ATTACKING AC-130'S, THE PREFERRED PAVN DEFENSIVE TACTIC WAS

TO SET UP AAA BATTERIES AT BOTH ENDS OF A STRETCH OF ROAD TO DEFEND AGAINST INCOMING AIRCRAFT FROM ALL DIRECTIONS. IN THIS PARTICULAR INSTANCE, THE AC-130 FLEW IN EXTREMELY LOW OVER THE CONVOY, WAS HIT BY 57MM ARTILLERY ROUNDS AT A POINT VERY CLOSE TO THE GROUND, THEN IMPACTED THE EARTH AND EXPLODED. SRCOL SY CLAIMED THERE WERE NO SURVIVORS AS THE PLANE WAS FLYING TOO LOW FOR ANY OF THOSE ON BOARD TO HAVE A CHANCE OF BAILING OUT. SRCOL SY COULD NOT REMEMBER THE EXACT LOCATION OF THE CRASH SITE, ONLY THAT IT WAS IN QUANG TRI PROVINCE NEAR ROUTE 9 SOUTHWEST OF KHE SANH (XD8438). HE RECALLED THAT THIS AIR STRIKE FOLLOWED THE SAME PATTERN AS B-52 STRIKES; THE STRIKE WAS FOLLOWED BY ARTILLERY: SRCOL SY SAID THAT ALTHOUGH THE AAA TACTIC EMPLOYED SPECIFICALLY

TO SHOOT DOWN THE AC-130'S DURING ATTACKS ON CONVOYS WAS VERY EFFECTIVE, IT OFTEN RESULTED IN THE LOSS OF THE VERY SAME AAA BATTERY BECAUSE OF THE TRAJECTORY OF A DAMAGED AIRCRAFT.

E. AFTER THIS INCIDENT, A SPECIAL THREE-MAN TEAM COMPOSED OF "SOVIETS" AND SPECIALISTS TRAINED BY THE "SOVIETS" REQUESTED TO TRAVEL TO THE SITE OF THE DOWNED AC-130 AIRCRAFT IN ORDER TO STUDY THE MATERIALS AND ELECTRONICS OF THE AC-130. AFTER THE MINISTRY OF DEFENSE AGREED TO ALLOW THE TEAM ACCESS TO THE WRECK, PERSONNEL FROM SRCOL SY'S UNIT ESCORTED THE TEAM TO THE SITE. SRCOL SY SAID THAT IN SIFTING THROUGH THE WRECKAGE, THE TEAM WAS UNABLE TO FIND ANY INTACT COMPONENTS. HE SAID THAT ALL AIRCRAFT COMPONENTS AND MATERIALS HAD BEEN COMPLETELY DESTROYED DURING THE CRASH AND THE SUBSEQUENT U.S. BOMBING OF THE SITE. SRCOL SY ADDED THAT NO REMAINS WERE EVER RECOVERED FROM THE WRECKAGE. IN HIS EXPERIENCE, THIS WAS NOT UNUSUAL SINCE THE PAVN WAS ACUTELY AWARE OF THE DESTRUCTIVE POWER OF THE B-52 RAID. TO ILLUSTRATE, SRCOL

SY SAID THAT IN A LARGE NUMBER OF INSTANCES, A UNIT WOULD KNOW THE EXACT NUMBER OF PERSONNEL IN A COMMAND POST TRENCH, AN AAA EMPLACEMENT, OR A BOMB SHELTER DURING A B-52 STRIKE. AFTER THE STRIKE IT WAS NOT UNCOMMON FOR THE UNIT TO BE UNABLE TO FIND ANY TRACE OF HUMAN REMAINS. SRCOL SY SAID THAT HE WAS AWARE OF EXTENSIVE PAVN EFFORTS DURING AND AFTER THE WAR TO RECOVER PAVN REMAINS WITH VERY LITTLE RESULTS.

F. DURING THE 1970-1971 TRANSPORT CAMPAIGN IN THE GENERAL QUANG TRI AREA, HE SAID, UNITS IN HIS AREA SHOT DOWN TWO HELICOPTERS, ONE RF-4, AND ONE AC-130. IN EACH INSTANCE, THERE WERE NO SURVIVORS AND THERE WERE NO REMAINS RECOVERED.

G. THE SOURCE CLAIMED HIS UNIT KEPT NO RECORDS ON EITHER OF THE TWO INCIDENTS WHICH HE RELATED TO THE JOINT TEAM. HE WENT ON TO EXPLAIN THAT THE VIETNAMESE WERE NOT EQUIPPED WITH MODERN RECORD KEEPING DEVICES SUCH AS CAMERAS, COMPUTERS, AND TAPE RECORDERS AND WERE NOT TASKED WITH KEEPING ORGANIZED RECORDS. HE CLAIMED ALL RECORDS REGARDING MOVEMENT OF PRISONERS FROM THE SOUTH TO HOLDING CAMPS IN THE NORTH WOULD HAVE BEEN MAINTAINED BY MILITARY REGION FIVE (MR5).

H. THE SOURCE ALSO MENTIONED THE DIFFICULTY VIETNAM HAS HAD RESOLVING ITS OWN MIA ISSUE AND SUGGESTING THAT IF THE U.S. OFFERED TO HELP THE VIETNAMESE IN THAT REGARD, THE U.S. MIGHT ENJOY BETTER COOPERATION FROM THE VIETNAMESE. SRCOL SY EXPRESSED HIS UNDERSTANDING OF THE HUMANITARIAN NATURE OF THE ISSUE AND ACKNOWLEDGED VIETNAM HAS A RESPONSIBILITY TO CONTRIBUTE TO THE RESOLUTION OF THE CASES. AT THE SAME TIME, HOWEVER, HE FELT THERE WAS LITTLE HOPE OF FINDING MORE REMAINS AND REITERATED HIS FIRM BELIEF THAT THERE ARE NOT NOW, AND HAVE NOT BEEN SINCE 1973, ANY U.S. PERSONNEL HELD AGAINST THEIR WILL IN VIETNAM.

I. WITH NO FURTHER QUESTIONS FOR SRCOL SY, THE JOINT TEAM AGREED TO CONCLUDE THE INTERVIEW.

4. CORRELATIONS TO EXISTING POW/MIA CASES. NONE. THE INCIDENTS, AS DESCRIBED BY SRCOL SY, CANNOT BE CORRELATED TO ANY U.S. LOSSES AT THIS TIME.

5. POTENTIAL LEADS: NONE.

6. MATERIAL EVIDENCE: NONE. THE SOURCE BROUGHT NO RECORDS, NOTEBOOKS, DIARIES, OR ANY MATERIAL EVIDENCE ASSOCIATED WITH UNACCOUNTED FOR U.S. PERSONNEL.

7. COMMENTS.

A. SRCOL SY SEEMED GENUINELY PLEASED TO HAVE THE OPPORTUNITY TO MEET THE JOINT TEAM AND EXPRESSED A SINCERE DESIRE TO HELP. HE DELIVERED HIS STATEMENTS OPENLY AND IN AN HONEST MANNER. HE EMPHASIZED THAT A LONG TIME HAS PASSED SINCE THESE INCIDENTS TOOK PLACE; THEREFORE, MANY OF THE SPECIFIC DETAILS ARE NO LONGER

CLEAR IN HIS MIND.
B. REQUEST THE VNOSMP MAKE SRCOL SY AVAILABLE FOR
REINTERVIEW IF NECESSAY.//

BT

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J2(1)...INFO FOR USCINCPAC HONOLULU H(13)
J30-M(1) J3(1) 00-01-04(1) WWMCS(0) MDT(0) LRN061PCMT(0) J52(1)
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