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ADMINISTRATIVE MESSAGE

ROUTINE

R 300802Z SEP 93 ZYB PSN 728466P33

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

TO SECDEF WASHINGTON DC//USDP:RSA//

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SUBJ/INTERVIEW OF REQUESTED SOURCE, LTG NAM NGA//

REF/A/FAX/DET 2/30SEP93//

RMKS/1. BACKGROUND. ON 14 SEPTEMBER 1993, A JOINT U.S./VIETNAM ORAL HISTORY PROGRAM INTERVIEW TEAM INTERVIEWED RETIRED LIEUTENANT GENERAL (LTG) NAM NGA, ALSO KNOWN AS NGUYEN MINH CHAU, AN 81 YOA RESIDENT OF 557 NGUYEN TRI PHUONG STREET, DISTRICT 10, HO CHI MINH CITY (HCMC). LTG NAM NGA IS THE FORMER COMMANDER OF PAVN MILITARY REGION 7 (MR7). THE TEAM MET AT THE EXTERNAL RELATIONS OFFICE, 6 THAI VAN LUNG STREET, DISTRICT 1, HCMC, TO INTERVIEW LTG NAM NGA, 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 CONTINGENT 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; AND PAVN LTC TRAN VAN TAN, MILITARY REGION SEVEN (MR7) HEADQUARTERS REPRESENTATIVE.

2. SUMMARY. THE SOURCE, LTG NAM NGA, IS A RETIRED FORMER COMMANDER OF MILITARY REGION 7 (MR7). HE PROVIDED LIMITED INFORMATION

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CONCERNING HIS ROLE DURING THE WAR AS A COMMANDER AND TALKED BRIEFLY ON VIETNAMESE POLICY REGARDING PRISONERS OF WAR (PW). THE SOURCE SAID THAT THERE WERE NO U.S. PERSONNEL LIVING FREELY OR AGAINST THEIR WILL IN THE MR7 REGION (FORMER B2 FRONT) AFTER THE RELEASE OF THE PRISONERS IN 1973. THE SOURCE CLAIMED NO KNOWLEDGE OF U.S. PERSONNEL LIVING FREELY OR AGAINST THEIR WILL IN OTHER MISSIONS OF VIETNAM SINCE 1973.

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

A. THE SOURCE, LTG NAM NGA (NAWM NGAF), WAS A COMMANDER OF MR7 DURING THE WAR. HE EXPLAINED HIS ROLE WAS THAT OF A PLANNER AND TACTICIAN IN SUPPORT OF B2 FRONT HEADQUARTERS, AND AS SUCH, HE DID NOT DIRECTLY PARTICIPATE IN BATTLES WITH U.S. FORCES. HIS MISSION WAS TO MAINTAIN OVERALL KNOWLEDGE OF THE MILITARY SITUATION WITHIN HIS REGION AND TO FORMULATE APPROPRIATE TACTICAL RESPONSES. HE NEVER ENCOUNTERED U.S. PERSONNEL AT ANY TIME DURING THE WAR. HE SAID HE HAD SEEN AMERICANS ON TELEVISION, BUT THIS INTERVIEW WAS THE FIRST TIME HE HAD EVER MET AN AMERICAN FACE TO FACE.

B. LTG NGA CLAIMED NO KNOWLEDGE OF U.S. PERSONNEL HELD IN MR7 OR ANYWHERE IN VIETNAM. HE EXPLAINED THAT THE POLITICAL OFFICE HAD SOLE RESPONSIBILITY FOR ACTION AND REPORTING ON U.S. PERSONNEL, INCLUDING NUMBERS OF WOUNDED, CAPTURED, AND KILLED. AS A TACTICAL COMMANDER, HE PERSONALLY WAS NOT INVOLVED IN SUCH MATTERS. HE SAID THAT IN ORDER TO GET ADEQUATE INFORMATION ON THOSE SUBJECTS, THE PERSONS TO DEAL WITH WOULD BE THE PERSONNEL WHO SERVED IN MILITARY POLITICAL OFFICES. LTG NGA PROVIDED THE NAMES OF INDIVIDUALS FORMERLY IN THE POLITICAL CHAIN OF COMMAND WHOM HE BELIEVED MAY BE ABLE TO PROVIDE MORE INFORMATION CONCERNING UNACCOUNTED FOR U.S. PERSONNEL. (SEE PARA 5 BELOW).

C. LTG NGA STATED THAT EARLY IN THE WAR THE VIETNAMESE CENTRAL GOVERNMENT ESTABLISHED POLICIES GOVERNING THE HANDLING OF U.S. PW'S. DESPITE FREQUENT SHORTAGES FOR THEIR OWN PERSONNEL, POLICY REQUIRED THE PROVISION OF ADEQUATE FOOD, SHELTER, AND MEDICAL CARE FOR THE PW'S. HE SAID THAT SINCE THE B2 FRONT WAS LOCATED SO VERY FAR FROM THEIR MAIN SUPPORT BASE IN THE NORTH, MORE THAN 2000 KILOMETERS DISTANT BY ROAD, AND MORE THAN FOUR MONTHS TO TRAVEL BETWEEN B2 AND THE NORTH, THE MANAGEMENT OF U.S. PW'S WITHIN THE B2 FRONT WAS VERY DIFFERENT FROM ANY OF THE OTHER AREAS OF OPERATIONS. LTG NGA SAID THAT IN MOST INSTANCES, U.S. SERVICEMEN WHO WERE KILLED IN ACTION WERE LEFT LYING WHERE THEY DIED. HE SAID THAT CAPTURED U.S. PERSONNEL WERE HANDLED ACCORDING TO THE SITUATION IN WHICH THEY WERE CAPTURED. LTG NGA SAID THAT HIS JOB WAS TO MAKE CERTAIN THAT HIS BATTLEFIELD COMMANDERS CARRIED OUT THE POLICY. AT THIS POINT IN THE INTERVIEW LTG NGA DIGRESSED FROM THIS SUBJECT AND SAID THAT IN ORDER

TO COMPREHEND HOW THE POLICY WAS IMPLEMENTED BY THE SOLDIERS ON THE BATTLEFIELD, ONE MUST FIRST COMPREHEND HOW THE POLICY WAS IMPLEMENTED BY THE SOLDIERS ON THE FRONT. HE SAID THAT AS A RESULT OF THE

TREMENDOUS FORCES THAT THE U.S. SIDE COULD BRING TO BEAR ON THE BATTLEFIELD AND THE EXTREMELY RAPID AIR STRIKE AND ARTILLERY RESPONSE TIMES, THE MILITARY FORCES IN HIS AREA OF OPERATIONS OPERATED UNDER A 15-MINUTE TACTICAL DECISION CONCEPT. HE SAID THAT 15 MINUTES WAS THE MAXIMUM AMOUNT OF TIME THAT A BATTLEFIELD COMMANDER COULD DELAY BEFORE EXITING THE IMMEDIATE AREA OF A COMBAT ENGAGEMENT. LTG NGA THEN REPHRASED THIS AND SAID THAT TACTICAL DECISIONS WERE MADE BY THE BATTLEFIELD COMMANDERS IN AN EXPEDIENT MANNER SOLELY TO AVOID SUFFERING ADDITIONAL CASUALTIES.

D. IMMEDIATELY AFTER EXPLAINING THE NEED FOR THE 15-MINUTE TACTICAL DECISION CONCEPT, LTG NGA DISCUSSED THE HANDLING OF CAPTURED U.S. PERSONNEL. HE SAID THAT WHENEVER U.S. PERSONNEL WERE CAPTURED, DETAINED, OR MOVED, IT WAS A VERY DANGEROUS SITUATION FOR ALL CONCERNED. LTG NGA SAID THAT SOME U.S. PERSONNEL WERE SIMPLY RELEASED AT VARIOUS LOCATIONS DURING THE COURSE OF THE WAR FOR THIS REASON. HE SAID THAT EVEN KEEPING U.S. PW'S SAFE FROM AIR STRIKES WAS DIFFICULT AND DANGEROUS. ADDITIONALLY, LTG NGA POINTED OUT THAT EVEN THOUGH POLICY DICTATED THAT FOOD, SHELTER, AND MEDICAL TREATMENT MUST BE PROVIDED TO U.S. PW'S, THERE WERE MANY TIMES WHEN HIS OWN FORCES HAD ONLY RICE. LTG NGA AFFIRMED THE NECESSITY FOR A POLICY GOVERNING THE TREATMENT OF U.S. PW'S, BUT EMPHASIZED THAT THE PERSONNEL WHO IMPLEMENTED THE POLICY OF MAINTAINING ADEQUATE RATIONS FOR U.S PW'S ALSO HAD TO RELY PRIMARILY ON A FOUR-MONTH LONG JOURNEY FOR THE RATIONS TO ARRIVE FROM THE NORTH. HE RECALLED THAT THERE WERE MANY OCCASIONS DURING WHICH HE REQUIRED AN URGENT RESPONSE FROM THE NORTH, AND HE WOULD BE FORCED TO WAIT FOUR OR FIVE MONTHS BEFORE HE ACTUALLY RECEIVED A RESPONSE.

E. ON THE SUBJECT OF REMAINS RECOVERY, LTG NGA SAID LOCATING GRAVE SITES WOULD BE EXTREMELY DIFFICULT DUE TO CHANGES IN VEGETATION, TERRAIN, AND LANDMARKS DUE TO THE PASSAGE OF TIME, THE WEATHER OVER THE YEARS AND THE DESTRUCTIVE NATURE OF WARFARE. AS ONE EXAMPLE, HE CITED A CASE IN WHICH A LARGE NUMBER OF VIETNAMESE WITNESSES INVOLVED IN ONE INCIDENT WERE UNABLE TO LOCATE A MASS GRAVE DESPITE THE FACT THAT THERE WERE MANY WITNESSES PRESENT AND THE SEARCH TOOK PLACE ONLY TWO YEARS AFTER THE BURIAL. AS ANOTHER
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SUBJ/INTERVIEW OF REQUESTED SOURCE, LTG NAM NGA//

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EXAMPLE, LTG NGA SAID THAT THERE ARE VAST, ISOLATED AREAS IN THE MEKONG DELTA REGION WHERE THERE ARE SIMPLY NO LANDMARKS EXISTING. HE SAID IT WOULD BE IMPOSSIBLE TO LOCATE A GRAVE SITE IN THE REMOTE AREAS AFTER ANY SIGNIFICANT PERIOD OF TIME DUE TO THE EFFECTS OF BOMBING, FLOODS, AND CHANGES IN VEGETATION.

F. LTG NGA SAID THAT, IN HIS OPINION, ONLY LOCAL AND PROVINCE AUTHORITIES HAVE A CHANCE TO FIND GRAVE SITES TODAY. IF THERE IS TO

BE ANY HOPE OF CONTINUED PROGRESS, LTG NGA SAID THAT THE MIA ACCOUNTING EFFORT MUST RELY ON THE HELP OF FORMER CADRE, POLITICAL OFFICERS, AND DIRECT PARTICIPANTS. HE COMMENDED U.S. EFFORTS AND SAID THE RESULTS TO DATE WERE VERY IMPRESSIVE. HE ACKNOWLEDGED THE POSSIBILITY THAT INDIVIDUAL VIETNAMESE CIVILIANS MAY BE HOLDING REMAINS, AND SUGGESTED WORKING DIRECTLY WITH PROVINCE AND DISTRICT LEVEL OFFICIALS TO GAIN THE COOPERATION OF THESE INDIVIDUALS. LTG NGA SUGGESTED THAT THERE MUST BE A WAY TO COMPENSATE THOSE INVOLVED, PERHAPS WITH FOOD, WATER, EQUIPMENT, AND MEDICINE. WHILE CONSIDERING THIS POINT FURTHER, LTG NGA SAID THAT HE BELIEVED THERE SHOULD BE A SYSTEM OF FAIR REWARD FOR THOSE WHO ACTUALLY LOCATE OR TURN OVER REMAINS.

G. THE SOURCE CLAIMED NO KNOWLEDGE OF ANY DOCUMENTS OR RECORDS CONCERNING U.S. PW'S. HE SAID UNITS WERE CONSTANTLY ON THE MOVE TO AVOID BOMBING, AND ROUTINELY DESTROYED WHATEVER DOCUMENTS HAD ACCUMULATED BEFORE MOVING. HE SAID THAT HE WAS UNAWARE OF ANY DOCUMENTS THAT MIGHT HAVE BEEN RETAINED BY ANY UNIT WITHIN THE B2 FRONT AREA, IF THAT UNIT WAS HOLDING U.S. PW'S AND WAS FORCED TO RELOCATE.

4. CORRELATIONS TO EXISTING POW/MIA CASES. NONE.

5. POTENTIAL LEADS: THE FOLLOWING INDIVIDUALS WERE IDENTIFIED BY LTG NGA AS HAVING PARTICIPATED IN MILITARY ACTIONS OR ACTIVITIES WHICH MAY HAVE INVOLVED U.S MIA'S:

A. LTG HAI CHINH (HAI CHINHS). A FORMER DIRECTOR OF THE B2 FRONT POLITICAL OFFICE WHO LATER WENT ON TO OTHER DUTIES. THE SOURCE DID NOT PROVIDE ANY CURRENT LOCATION DATA.

B. TAM TAC (TAM TACS) AKA TRAN VAN TAC (TRAANF VAWN TACS). A FORMER B2 FRONT POLITICAL OFFICER WHO POSSIBLY LIVES IN THE HANOI AREA.

C. NGUYEN VAN THUONG (NGUYEENX VAWN THWONG). A FORMER DEPUTY OF THE ENEMY PROSELYTING DEPARTMENT IN HANOI. MR THUONG WAS INTERVIEWED BY A JOINT TEAM ON 11 MAY 93.

D. NGUYEN CONG TRUNG (NGUYEENX COONG TRUNG), A FORMER ENEMY PROSELYTING CADRE. ACCORDING TO LTC KY, MR. TRUNG HAS MET WITH JOINT TEAMS ON SEVERAL OCCASIONS.

E. THE SOURCE SAID THAT HE SHOULD BE ABLE TO REMEMBER OTHER POTENTIAL LEADS BUT THAT IT HAD BEEN MORE THAN 18 YEARS SINCE THE END OF THE WAR AND HE COULD NOT REMEMBER ANY OTHERS.

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. LTG NGA APPEARED TO BE VERY WEAK DURING THE INTERVIEW. MR. [redacted] HAD TO SIT SHOULDER-TO-SHOULDER WITH LTG NGA IN ORDER TO BE ABLE TO HEAR HIM SPEAK. AFTER THE INTERVIEW, HCMC OFFICIALS INFORMED

THE OHP TEAM THAT LTG NGA HAD BEEN IN ILL HEALTH FOR SOME TIME. THE OFFICIALS SAID THAT LTG NGA INSISTED ON APPEARING FOR THE INTERVIEW ONCE HE LEARNED OF THE REQUEST FROM THE U.S. SIDE. THROUGHOUT THE INTERVIEW SESSION, LTG NGA EXHIBITED SEVERE PROBLEMS WITH CONTROL OF ARM, LEG, AND FACIAL MUSCLES. LTG NGA WAS APPARENTLY IN SOME DISCOMFORT BUT CONTINUED THE INTERVIEW IN A CORDIAL, FRIENDLY MANNER. HE DID NOT COMPLAIN ABOUT HIS HEALTH DURING THE INTERVIEW. LTG NGA MADE ONE SHORT COMMENT ABOUT HIS MEMORY FAILING HIM ON OCCASION.

B. THE MEMBERS OF THE JOINT TEAM CONFERRED ON THE QUESTIONS TO BE ASKED DURING THIS INTERVIEW. TEAM MEMBERS AGREED THAT THE NEED TO REINTERVIEW THIS SUBJECT WOULD DEPEND ON WHETHER FURTHER QUESTIONS FOR LTG NGA ARISE DURING THE COURSE OF THE ORAL HISTORY INTERVIEW TEAM'S FUTURE WORK.

C. REQUEST THE VNOSMP MAKE LTG NGA AVAILABLE FOR REINTERVIEW IF NECESSARY.//

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J2(1)...INFO FOR USCINCPAC HONOLULU H(13)
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