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JOINT CASUALTY RESOLUTION CENTER
NAS BARBERS POINT, HAWAII 96302

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(C)BP87-009
16 Sep 87

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Hospital ?
Aug 78

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From: OPS Officer
To: CDR, JCRC

Subj: INTERVIEW OF CREWMAN FROM THE YACHT "SEA TIGER" (U)

1. (C) Source:

- a. Name: Eric S. Ingram
- b. DOB: 17 November 1946
- c. Position: Independent diver - currently unemployed due to injury
- e. Present mailing address:
- f. DOI: 30 June 1977 - Mid-December 1978
- g. Date of Interview: 26-28 August 1987
- h. Interviewed by: GYSGT D. M. McIntyre, USMC and MSGT K. G. Flanagan, USAF

1. Other: Source stated that he served in the U.S. Navy from 1964 to 1967, receiving an Undesireable Discharge for use of marijuana.

2. (C) Source was one of two crewmen aboard the yacht "Sea Tiger", which was captured in Vietnamese territorial waters on 30 June 1977. This report concerns his activities and locations during the 18 months of his captivity. Source was unwilling to discuss any part of his itinerary prior to that date, his reasons for being in Southeast Asia, or any information concerning ownership of the yacht. He related the following.

3. (C) While enroute to Thailand, the "Sea Tiger," a CT-41 with white hull and sails, flying a small U.S. flag, strayed into Vietnamese territorial waters during a storm. After the storm the yacht was positioned about five miles to the east of Phu Quoc Island. At about sunset on 30 June 1977, a small military craft arrived in the area. The crew of this boat began making signals for the yacht to approach. At this point, source and his companion, JAMES PAUL COTTON, attempted to make the open seas. The military craft fired a warning shot and they maintained position until the other craft came along side. After an unsuccessful attempt to tie the two boats side by side, the "Sea Tiger" was taken in tow. Source was unsure of the length of time they were towed. During this time he drank almost a fifth of brandy and became quite intoxicated. The "Sea Tiger" was taken to within about 100 meters of a small island and anchored. Source could not provide the name of this island. They were boarded by about 20 oriental males armed with rifles. Source and Cotton were searched and their personal belongings were taken. He stated that the items taken from him, watch, wallet and passport, were returned to him prior to his release. The men were loosely bound and blindfolded and transferred to the smaller, military craft. Source stated that the small island appeared uninhabited as he saw no one on the shore.

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4. (C) After about two hours, during which the "Sea Tiger" was searched, they were transported to a another area. The trip lasted about two hours and the boat traveled at what source could describe only as a "fast" rate of speed. After landing at a dock, they were taken to a small building which source described as an 8 X 10 foot concrete bunker with a dirt floor. Source described his treatment at this location as neutral. He was asked no questions and saw only a few guards who he recognized from his time of capture. He became violently ill due to the brandy he had consumed. One of the guards seemed concerned and brought him some coconut milk to drink. Source was unable to see outside the building due to the lack of windows. The building contained only one door. He believes that there were no other structures near as his blindfold was loose and he could see under it when taken in and out. It was at this time that he discovered he was in Vietnam from a guard who repeated the name several times.

5. (C) After about 36 hours he was again bound and blindfolded loosely, taken out, and placed in a vehicle between two guards. He was then placed in a helicopter which flew for about two hours and landed where he later learned was Ho Chi Minh City. Source was again placed in a vehicle and driven for 20 to 30 minutes. He was able to see under his blindfold and could tell that the trip was through city streets. He could see people wearing conical hats and "black pajamas." He believes that there is a good possibility that he was observed by people in the streets during the ride as no attempt was made to hide him from view. After leaving the bunker he did not see Cotton again until they were transported to Hanoi. He was unable to describe the vehicles in which he rode, other than to say they appeared to be jeeps, nor could he describe the helicopter. When he arrived in Ho Chi Minh City he was turned over to guards who he thought were in a naval service due to their uniforms. Uniforms consisted of blue trousers, white shirts with blue striping at the neck. Source seemed to recall blue pith helmets but was unsure of this. The guards were armed with rifles which had banana clips inserted. The type of rifle is not known to source.

6. (C) Source could not describe the route taken to his place of incarceration. He did believe that a portion of it may have been along a large river as he seems to recall hearing a boat horn. Upon arrival, source found himself in a large, dirt courtyard measuring approximately 60 by 80 meters. There were three buildings in the area which was enclosed by a seven meter wall. Included in sketch 1 (enclosed) is a drawing of a large building in which he was questioned. This is the only structure which he could describe. He stated that he was able to see it through a crack in a boarded up window in his room. Source added that there may have been a waterway of some type on the other side of the road which fronted this complex. He stated that he could occasionally hear a boat horn but could not estimate the distance of the sound. He also stated that this complex was in a heavily trafficked area, as he could hear sounds of vehicles throughout most of the day.

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7. (C) Source estimated that he arrived at this facility on about 2 July 1977. His interrogations started the day after arrival. The interrogator was never introduced and posed his questions through an interpreter. Source stated that the interpreter spoke only poor English and became easily confused by anything but very basic vocabulary. The sessions were conducted in a friendly setting and usually commenced with an offer of tea and cigarettes. Conducted daily for about two hours each, the sessions were very repetitive; always centering around source identification, destination at time of capture and reason for being in Southeast Asia. Source repeatedly attempted to question the interrogator as to Cotton's whereabouts and condition. The only answer he ever received was that Cotton was being taken care of. Source stated that while here he was required to write his biography several times. No explanation was given for this. His treatment was rather neutral, neither harsh nor particularly good. Occasionally his guards would point their rifles at him as though preparing to shoot. He described the guards as being young (estimated at 14-15 years of age). They usually wore green uniforms, the shirts varying between short and long sleeves.

8. (C) Source provided the following descriptions of himself and Cotton for this period of time:

a. (C) Source - Age: 30; height: 5 feet, 8 inches; weight: 150 Lbs; clean shaven; hazel eyes, blond hair of medium length (actually a "dishwater blond"); no glasses, jewelry, scars or identifying marks; wearing blue jeans and T-shirt (color unrecalled), no hat and barefoot.

b. (C) Cotton - Age: 29; height: 5 feet, 9 inches; weight: 175 Lbs; ruddy complexion and clean shaven, sun-bleached blond hair of medium length; color eyes unrecalled; ; no glasses, jewelry, scars or identifying marks; wearing blue jeans, T-shirt (color unrecalled), brown canvas deck shoes and no hat.

9. (C) After two weeks in this facility an escort arrived at his room, bound and blindfolded source, and took him outside. He was placed in a vehicle and driven for approximately one half hour. He was taken into a building and placed in a small 8 X 15 foot room. Source was not told a reason for this move. Source stated that he could see nothing whatever from this location. Source is sure that only his billet was changed and not the actual location of confinement. His basis for this is that he is sure that some of the guards were the same as those in the first area although he is not absolutely positive. The only description he was able to render of the vehicle in which he rode was that it was covered and contained two bench style seats. He added that, while he could see a bit from beneath his blindfold, the move occurred at night and it was very dark.

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10. (C) With the new location, the style of the interrogation sessions also changed. The first session began with his being brought to a small room and forced to stand with his face about three inches from a wall for 6 hours. He was then asked the same questions as before. While never beaten, he was jabbed with rifles upon several occasions and the questions were delivered in a much rougher tone of voice. He was accused of being a CIA agent and repeatedly asked who his station chief was. This treatment continued for about six weeks. Other than the rifle jabs he was not physically abused. He continued providing biographies through this period.

11. (C) After about six weeks (source stated that this is an estimate and may differ considerably from actuality) he was again blindfolded and bound; then driven to an airport. He could not describe the approximate one half hour ride, the vehicle or the exterior of the aircraft into which he climbed from the hood of the vehicle. He stated that there is a good chance that he was observed during the ride by people in the area. The move was accomplished at about 8 A.M. and he was sitting upright in the vehicle. From beneath his blindfold he could see that the aircraft had no seats in the cargo area and the crew was wearing civilian clothing rather than uniforms. He was unable to recall details of dress. The aircraft seemed to be a cargo plane as he sat among large sacks and crates. At one point, he heard Cotton ask a question and therefore knew he was also aboard. He did not attempt to communicate with Cotton.

12. (C) Source stated that his appearance was identical as that described above with the exception of a 10 to 15 lbs weight loss. He was unable to describe Cotton as he did not see him.

13. (C) After a flight of about four to five hours, the aircraft landed in or near Hanoi. Source could not explain how he knew the location and assumed that he must have heard it from someone. He was taken off the aircraft and forced to sit by a wheel for about an hour. Source saw only a few people near the aircraft. He was then placed in an enclosed jeep-like vehicle and he was driven for about two to three hours. Shortly before arriving at the destination, the vehicle went through an agricultural area. He learned from his interrogator that this area consisted of tea plants. He arrived at an area near a small pond which he believes is generally north of Hanoi. He could not explain the basis of this belief.

14. (C) Source was billeted in a small structure near the pond. Across the pond was a dormitory like structure which housed about 50 Vietnamese. Source saw these men morning and evening daily as they went to and from work details. He stated that his impression was that they were performing forced labor because the details were normally accompanied by an armed guard. Additionally, source stated that no attempt was made to hide him from the view of these workers and, consequently, they saw him on a daily basis for a period of about three months. Source described the pond as a 50 by 70 meter oval shaped body of water. The long axis ran generally east to west (see sketch 2).

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15. (C) Source stated that his appearance varied little from that described above. His weight at this time was about 135 lbs. By this time he had been given a pair of shorts and rubber sandals. He believes that on one occasion he may have had a one month growth of beard which he stated was rather full. Generally, he was required to shave at least once a week and was given a haircut about every ten days. During this period of time he was not interviewed. He had no daily activities at all. Occasionally he would wash his clothes near the pond. He was visited daily by a Vietnamese, whose name he did not know, who inquired about his health. Source asked this man for reading materials and was provided with a variety of communist party literature. The few guards in this area were dressed in green shirts and trousers. No other description could be given according to source.

16. (C) At about Christmas time in 1977 source was bound and blindfolded and driven in what he believes was a southerly direction for two to three hours to a detention camp located in a suburban area of Hanoi. He stated that he did not realize the camp was near Hanoi until his release at which time he was taken to Hanoi without a blindfold. The route traveled was over generally flat terrain on a graded dirt road. He could not recall going over bridges and, therefore, assumes that he crossed no rivers or streams. He was not absolutely sure of this point however. (See sketch 3.)

17. (C) Source saw a number of uniformed Vietnamese during the year he stayed in this facility. He was never told any names and could not render descriptions. At different times they wore green or khaki uniforms with red collar tabs. He stated that the tabs ranged from having nothing on them to four stars. He assumed that those wearing stars were officers as these were the only ones with whom he had personal contact.

18. (C) He was interrogated approximately once every two weeks throughout his stay. Sessions were normally conducted in a friendly tone beginning with inquiries as to his health. He believes that he wrote out at least a half dozen biographies while here. His interrogator always wore civilian clothes and introduced himself as Mr. Nam and claimed to work for the Ministry of Foreign Affairs. It was at this location that he was informed that he was charged with invading Vietnamese territorial waters. Source stated that he signed two confessions to this crime. Additionally he was required to read a prepared statement to this effect which was recorded. The confessions and the prepared statement were obviously written by a non-native English speaker. Source stated that he was at first reluctant to sign a confession. He was convinced to do so by his interrogator. From source's descriptions of interrogation sessions, Mr. Nam primarily used a combination of futility (no one knows you are here - we can keep you forever) and a one man variation of the Mutt and Jeff/good guy - bad guy technique. He was often told how lucky he was to have been captured by Vietnam rather than Cambodia.

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19. (C) About a week after arriving at this facility source heard someone whistling "Yellow Submarine." He stated that he knew immediately that the origin of the whistling was Cotton, who source knew to be a very accomplished whistler. He attempted to whistle in return. Thereafter he and Cotton would communicate by yelling back and forth. This was discouraged by the guards but no violence was used. (Source stated emphatically that at no time during his incarceration was he ever beaten.) Source believes that, due to the shouting in English, the Vietnamese inmates of the facility knew there were Americans there. He added that none actually saw him until about a month prior to his release. In explanation he stated that the doors to the cells (see sketch 3) contained small view ports which could be closed. Anytime he was outside his cell, to remove the chamber pot or receive meals brought by guards, all other view ports were closed. Also, his was closed whenever anyone other than a guard was outside his cell.

20. (C) In about what source believes was August 1978, he contracted cholera. After approximately one week of illness, he was placed in a vehicle and taken to a hospital. During the ride, which lasted about 45 minutes, he was lying in the back of a station wagon. He attempted to sit up several times in order to see where he was and was gently pushed back down. At one point, he believes the vehicle was going through a large metropolitan area as there were many large buildings along the street. He believes that there is a good possibility that he was seen by many people in the street even though it was dark.

21. (C) Upon arrival at the hospital, source was admitted immediately. He stated that, to the best of his ability, he recalls the hospital was constructed in a horseshoe shape with the two wings extending toward the street. There was a large amount of rubble in evidence as though the building has been bombed. The hospital seemed to be in a large suburban area as there was no concentration of buildings near and seemed to be about four stories high. Source was placed in a large private room. Entry to the room was gained through a large room, which appeared to be a nurses' lounge, that was located off a corridor. Source was unsure of his location within the hospital itself. The interior walls were very thick, similar to construction techniques used during French occupation. Source was allowed to use a small balcony located off the lounge area which he believes was on the 4th floor. It provided a view of the area around the hospital. He described the area as containing rice fields. Out to the sides were many tall, green trees planted in rows as though for a wind break. Also, there were several tall towers (exact number unrecalled) resembling water towers. These were 75 to 100 feet tall, brown and had speakers mounted on them from which source could hear music. He saw no paved roads, streams, rivers, lakes or ponds. There were several dirt roads laid out in what he described as an agricultural grid.

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22. (C) Source stated that he was treated with inoculations and intravenous fluids. He was seen daily by a doctor who was accompanied by an interpreter. Mr. Nam visited him several times during his week-long stay. Source was allowed to walk in the halls twice and is sure he was seen by other patients. Source described the hospital as "very spartan", with no air-conditioning or vents/ductwork for air-conditioning. No names were provided to source and he stated that he could not draw an accurate sketch of the hospital or the area viewed from the balcony.

23. (C) Source stated that during his trip to and from the hospital he wore a camouflage shirt, trousers with a draw string waist and rubber sandals. His weight was about 120 lbs due to dehydration. Otherwise his appearance had not changed.

24. (C) After a week in the hospital, source was returned to the detention camp. He was allowed to sit up in the station wagon during the one hour trip. He is sure that many people saw him from the roadside. He was not bound or blindfolded however, he stated he could not sketch or accurately describe the route taken due to the passage of time. He estimated that on the trip the vehicle traveled about 12 kilometers through an agricultural area from the hospital to a built-up area. The distance through this area was about seven kilometers. There were many multi-story buildings and a large volume of vehicular traffic in this area. From this point the vehicle traveled about six kilometers through agricultural lands. Source could not recall the type of crops.

25. (C) After his return from the hospital (source could not provide a more specific time), a guard took source to the end of the building in which his cell was located. He showed source what appeared to be bullet holes in the wall. The guard pointed at the holes and said "Nixon." Source assumed that the holes were caused by strafing from an aircraft. He also believes that the guard said "seventy-two" which he assumed to be the year in which the incident occurred. During the year in which he was at this location source heard some air traffic. He estimated that on about 12 occasions he heard propeller driven aircraft although he never actually saw any.

26. (C) In about November 1978, source was advised that he would be released. About a month later, he believes it was almost Christmas, he and Cotton were taken to Hanoi. Their wallets (less cash), passports and wrist watches were returned to them and they were billeted in a hotel (name unknown) as guests of the government. During their three day stay in Hanoi, they were shown around the city as though they were tourists. There was no attempt to keep them hidden. On what source believed to be either 24 or 25 December 1978, he and Cotton were taken to an airport, given tickets to Bangkok, and departed Vietnam. He was never given a specific reason for his release and added that he did not care enough to ask. The fact that he was leaving was sufficient.

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27. (C) Concerning sketches and descriptions, source stated that he could furnish no details other than those in the enclosures and comments recorded above. He added that he did not pay particular attention to details while incarcerated. He attempted to make two sketches not previously mentioned in this report. Sketch 4 is his recollection of the appearance of Phu Quoc Island as seen prior to capture. Sketch 5 is his recollection of other islands in the area as viewed from the "Sea Tiger."

28. (C) Source stated that, other than Cotton, at no time during his stay in Vietnam did he see or hear of westerners or individuals who could be mistaken for westerners. Additionally, he could not recall having seen any artifacts of U.S. POWs.

29. (C) A variety of maps of Saigon, Hanoi, and surrounding areas, including relatively recent tourist-type maps, were presented to source in an attempt to locate detention facilities. He was unable to even guess at any locations.

30. (C) Comments. Source was cooperative throughout most of the interview. He hesitated when asked questions concerning identification of his captors. The only description he provided of any Vietnamese was a standard "short, dark complexion, dark eyes" etc. At one point he stated that he held nothing against the Vietnamese and felt only gratitude towards them for releasing him. He stated that he is willing to be reinterviewed if further questions arise.

31. (C) Dates of incarceration. From the outset of the interview, source insisted that the duration of his stay in Vietnam was from 30 June 1976 to Christmas 1977. This was constantly addressed throughout the two and half days in which source was available. During a final attempt to reconcile his claim with information previously received, source recalled that he had reached his 30th birthday the November before his capture. This placed his capture on 30 June 1977 and release at Christmas 1978 which corresponds to data received from the Vietnamese. He could provide no reason for Cotton's claim of 30 June 1977 to September 1980. When told of the three years and three months claim by Cotton he appeared to be amazed and commented "I don't know what he's on, but there's no way we were kept that long." Source stated that he had never been to Southeast Asia before.

32. (C) Local FBI agent requests that DIA forward a copy of this report to Headquarters, FBI and Honolulu Branch Office, Attn: Mr. Coleman.

D. M. McIntyre
D. M. MCINTYRE
GYSGT, USMC
Operations Officer
Acting

Enclosures

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ANALYSIS & STUDIES

REFUGEE REPORT & EVALUATION

SOURCE DATA: LE VAN PHUNG, 38

REFUGEE REPORT INTERVIEW NR & DATE: T82-017, 26 May 82

ANALYST: MSGT D. D. CURTIS

CROSS REFERENCE(S): I79-009, I79-013, I80-001, I80-008, I80-012, I80-027, I81-006, I81-017,
I81-029, M79-012, M79-034, M79-200, M81-007, M81-013, M81-015, M81-017, M81-029, M81-043, P81-011,
I81-019, P81-048, S80-008, S80-011, S81-003, S81-004, S81-006, T79-042, T80-011, T80-014, T80-043,
I80-080, T81-002, T81-041, T81-046, T81-051, T81-058, T82-005, I82-005, I82-013, M82-024, T82-016,
I81-001, P82-025.

CATEGORY DATA: Live sighting/first hand account.

FINDINGS: Review of data supplied by the source reveals a probable correlation to REFNO 0155,
Robert Garwood.CORRELATE DATA: Robert Garwood was captured near Da Nang in September 1965. He elected to remain
in Vietnam after operation homecoming.BACKGROUND/COMMENTS: Other refugee reports which were correlated to Garwood have indicated a
Cambodian repairing an electric power generator in the Yen Bai area.


JOE B. HARVEY
JTC, USA
Commander

DISPOSITION: JCRC Liaison Office, Bangkok
JCRC A&S Files
OSD/ISA, PW-MIA Affairs
DIA, DI-H2
JCRC REFNO File: 0155

FOLLOW-UP:
JCL 7 JUN 88

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