



DEFENSE INTELLIGENCE AGENCY

WASHINGTON, D.C. 20340



**DIA EVALUATION OF INFORMATION PROVIDED BY THE
SOCIALIST REPUBLIC OF VIETNAM IN THE CASE OF
COMMANDER HARLEY HALL, USN**

On 13 July 1988, during a remains repatriation ceremony in Hanoi, representatives of the Vietnamese Office For Seeking Missing Persons (VNOSMP) furnished Joint Casualty Resolution Center (JCRC) officials with six written investigative reports. In the case of Commander Harley H. Hall, USN, the written report reiterates much of the information previously furnished by the U.S. in the JCRC negotiation narrative. It goes on to claim that a "team" as well as two "VNOSMP" specialists, visited the location where the Navy officer was lost, researched historical documents in the villages and talked to "individuals directly related to this incident." According to the report, "Commander Phillip" (LCDR Phillip Kientzler, returnee) was captured; the other commander was found dead and buried in a trench. The investigative team claims to have visited the grave site and observed that it had been exhumed and the remains taken. The local populace allegedly told the team that "from about 1981-1982 up until the present time, many people from different areas came to rob the grave, a total of as many as eight occasions, the most recent being February 1988. Because of this, nothing is left in the grave site to be recovered. The local authorities carried out an investigation concerning the grave robbery but without results." The report concludes with the comment that the investigative team is not able to recover the remains of this pilot.

While we have no information which would indicate that Commander Hall survived to become a captive of the Vietnamese, the claims made by the Socialist Republic of Vietnam (SRV) authorities regarding this incident stretch credulity and totally contradict their known policies and practices in handling remains of Americans.

Based upon all-source intelligence collection efforts over a period spanning more than two decades, we can state with certainty that there is a centrally administered program which outlines strict procedures for handling the remains of Americans. Throughout the war the Communist forces enforced a policy to find and bury Americans killed in action, and captured enemy documents continually stressed that this effort was important to the "political struggle." The procedures required that a full written report on the incident be prepared, to include a sketch of the burial location. When possible, photos of the Americans were supposed to be taken, and all personal effects, documents, maps, etc. were to be forwarded with the written report up the chain of command to Hanoi. Americans were buried in marked graves in well defined (if primitive by U.S. standards) cemeteries. Buried with them would be a paper which included the American's name, date, place and cause of death. This procedure was also followed in burying Vietnamese soldiers killed in battle.

Vietnamese public health laws require that remains be buried for at least three years before they are exhumed (a common Vietnamese practice) and reinterred in a final location. In the case of many Americans, after being buried for three years or more, remains were probably prepared and stored in a warehouse type situation.

{ In the specific instance of Commander Hall, if indeed he died at the time of his loss incident, one must presume that the outlined procedures were followed and he was not simply buried in a convenient nearby trench. }

Further, the area where he was lost was under the control of combat troops at the time, which calls into question the Vietnamese claim that it was necessary to review village historical documents (which probably do not exist) and talk to villagers allegedly involved in the incident. Further, had villagers been interviewed and local documents researched, the VNOSMP representatives would have certainly discovered information on the two Americans who were lost in this same area only minutes after Commander Hall's aircraft was downed.

The claim that the grave was repeatedly robbed by "many people from different areas," is highly implausible. In general, Vietnamese citizens are highly superstitious about the dead and are not roaming the country robbing graves. Further, as all personal effects would have been previously forwarded to Hanoi, it should be well known to any would-be grave robbers that there is nothing of monetary value in the grave.

Over the past several years numerous SRV actions and statements appear to be aimed toward creating the illusion that they have difficulty accounting for missing Americans because private citizens are recovering and trafficking in remains. This is simply not the case.

{ In summary, the report furnished by the SRV is implausible and in direct conflict with their known policies and practices. Based on the circumstances of Commander Hall's loss we believe the communist government of Vietnam has more information and for reasons known only to them has decided to concoct this story instead. }