

CASE 0049

ON 29 DECEMBER 1964, SGT HAROLD G. BENNETT, AND PVT CHARLES E. CRAFTS WERE MEMBERS OF MACV ADVISORY TEAM 95 SERVING WITH THE 2ND COMPANY, 33RD ARVN RANGER BATTALION ON AN OPERATION IN SOUTH VIETNAM. IN THE AFTERNOON THE UNIT WAS INSERTED INTO THE VICINITY OF BINH GIA, PHOU C TUY PROVINCE. THE COMPANY THEN MOVED TO THE VICINITY OF GRID COORDINATES YS 549755 AND MADE CONTACT WITH THE ENEMY. DURING THE ENSUING FIRE-FIGHT THE ARVN COMPANY BROKE AND RAN, AND SGT BENNETT AND PVT CRAFTS WERE TAKEN PRISONER.

ON 2 JAN 1965, THEY JOINED ANOTHER US POW, CAPT DONALD G. COOK, A USMC ARVN ADVISOR. OVER THE NEXT FIVE MONTHS THESE THREE MEN WERE HELD TOGETHER AT FOUR DIFFERENT ENEMY CAMPS. IN MID-MAY 1965 CAPT COOK AND SGT BENNETT ATTEMPTED TO ESCAPE, BUT WERE UNSUCCESSFUL. ON 28 MAY 1965, WHILE MOVING TO A NEW CAMP, PVT CRAFTS AND CAPT COOK WERE TOLD BY THEIR GUARDS THAT SGT BENNETT HAD BEEN KILLED BECAUSE HE WAS UNABLE TO TRAVEL. SGT BENNETT'S LAST KNOWN LOCATION IS ESTIMATED TO BE IN THE VICINITY OF GRID COORDINATES YS 550 730. THE DIED-IN-CAPTIVITY LIST PROVIDED BY THE PROVISIONAL REVOLUTIONARY GOVERNMENT, STATED THAT SGT BENNETT DIED IN JUNE 1965.

PRIOR TO THE VESSEY-THACH AGREEMENT IN AUGUST 1987, VISITS TO THE LOCAL AREA WERE NOT POSSIBLE. THESE INDIVIDUAL'S NAMES AND IDENTIFYING DATA WERE TURNED OVER TO THE FOUR-PARTY JOINT MILITARY TEAM WITH A REQUEST FOR ANY INFORMATION AVAILABLE. NO RESPONSE WAS FORTHCOMING. THE US HAS PRESSED THE COMMUNISTS ON SEVERAL OCCASIONS FOR DISCUSSIONS OF PROCEDURES BY WHICH THE REMAINS OF THESE INDIVIDUALS WOULD BE RETURNED TO US CONTROL. PVT CRAFTS WAS RETURNED TO US CONTROL BY THE VC ON 16 FEB 1967. SGT BENNETT IS CURRENTLY CARRIED IN THE PRESUMPTIVE STATUS OF DEAD, BODY NOT RECOVERED.

A SOURCE REPORTED DISCOVERING SKELETAL REMAINS OF A U.S. SOLDIER WHILE PLOWING RICE FIELDS IN THE VICINITY OF YS 5277. THIS POSSIBLY PERTAINS TO SGT HAROLD G. BENNETT. ON 7 AND 8 SEPTEMBER 1992, DURING THE 19TH JFA, A JOINT TEAM TRAVELED TO CHAU THANH DISTRICT, BA RIA-VUNG TAU PROVINCE AND CONDUCTED AN INVESTIGATION OF CASE 0049. THE TEAM INTERVIEWED SIX WITNESSES WHO PROVIDED INFORMATION CONCERNING THE CAPTURE AND TRANSFER OF ONE CAPTAIN AND ONE OTHER AMERICAN SOLDIER. EACH WITNESS PROVIDED TESTIMONY ACKNOWLEDGING THE CAPTURE AND TRANSFER OF THE PRISONERS. THE WITNESS COULD NOT PROVIDE ANY FURTHER INFORMATION ABOUT THE FATE OF THE PRISONERS ONCE THE TRANSFER TOOK PLACE. THE CAPTURE OF THE AMERICANS TOOK PLACE LATE IN 1964 OR EARLY 1965 DURING THE BATTLE FOR BINH GIA VILLAGE (YS 495775).

IN MARCH 1993, FORMER ENEMY PROSELYTING DEPARTMENT CADRE SR COL NGUYEN CONG TRUNG WAS INTERVIEWED BY JTF-FA SPECIAL ASSISTANT, MR G.E. BELL. SR COL TRUNG PROVIDED INFORMATION ABOUT A BATTLE WHICH ALLEGEDLY OCCURRED NEAR XUAN SON VILLAGE (YS5677), BA RIA-VUNG TAU PROVINCE, IN 1964. HE CLAIMED THREE AMERICAN ADVISORS WERE CAPTURED IN THE BATTLE. HE REPORTED THAT THE THREE CAPTURED AMERICANS WERE TURNED OVER TO AN ESCORT TEAM FROM COSVN. ANALYSIS

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INDICATES A PROBABLE CORRELATION TO REFNO 0049 AND REFNO 0050. A NEGOTIATION FOLDER ON HAROLD G. BENNETT WAS PASSED TO THE SRV DURING THE 6-9 FEBRUARY 1985 AND 28-31 OCTOBER 1987 JOINT CASUALTY RESOLUTION CENTER (JCRC) TECHNICAL MEETING IN HANOI. A CASE NARRATIVE PERTAINING TO HAROLD G. BENNETT WAS PASSED BY THE JCRC ON 4 AUGUST 1987 TO THE SRV EMBASSY IN BANGKOK PURSUANT TO AGREEMENTS REACHED BETWEEN GENERAL VESSEY AND SRV FOREIGN MINISTER NGUYEN CO THACH. CASE NARRATIVE 0049 WAS PASSED TO REPRESENTATIVES OF THE VIETNAMESE GOVERNMENT FOLLOWING THE 30-31 JULY 1992 POW/MIA TECHNICAL MEETING.

ASSOCIATED INDIVIDUALS: HAROLD G. BENNETT 0049-1-01, AND CHARLES E. CRAFTS 0049-2-02 AND DONALD G. COOK 0050-0-01.

ASSESSMENT BY MR G.E. BELL, CO-CHAIRMAN, POW/MIA COMMITTEE VIETNAM VETERANS OF AMERICA-ARKANSAS, AND PRESIDENT, NATIONAL VETERANS RESEARCH CENTER-ARKANSAS: THIS IS A DISCREPANCY CASE WITH THE INDIVIDUAL LISTED ON THE PROVISIONAL REVOLUTIONARY GOVERNMENT (PRG) DIED-IN-CAPTIVITY (DIC) LIST. THERE HAS BEEN ONLY ONE SUBSEQUENT REPORT CORRELATED TO THE CASE (M83-064). THIS REPORT INDICATED REMAINS WERE FOUND, BUT NO IDENTIFICATION MEDIA INFORMATION HAS THUS FAR BEEN RECEIVED. ASSOCIATED CASE 0050 IS ALSO A DISCREPANCY CASE AND CPT COOK'S NAME IS ALSO INCLUDED ON THE (DIC) LIST OF THE PRG. DURING THE ORAL HISTORY INTERVIEWS I CONDUCTED IN MARCH 1993, TWO SOURCES PROVIDED INFORMATION WHICH HAS BEEN CORRELATED TO THIS CASE. ONE SOURCE, SR COL NGUYEN CONG TRUNG, REPORTED THAT HE PERSONALLY QUESTIONED BOTH SGT BENNETT, PFC CRAFTS, AND CPT COOK (CASE 0050), AND EXAMINED DOCUMENTS IN THEIR POSSESSION. (SEE DET 1 JTF-FA MSG 281036Z MAR 93). THIS MAY ACCOUNT FOR THE LACK OF IDENTIFICATION MEDIA TYPE REPORTING ASSOCIATED WITH THE REPORT INDICATING REMAINS WERE DISCOVERED IN DONG NAI, SINCE ALL DOCUMENTS WERE MOST LIKELY REMOVED FROM THE MEN AT THE TIME SR COL TRUNG EXAMINED THEM. SR COL TRUNG REPORTED THAT HE RADIOED TO THE CENTRAL OFFICE FOR SOUTH VIETNAM (COSVN) AND INFORMED THE HQ CONCERNING THE CAPTURE. HE SAID AN ESCORT TEAM ARRIVED FROM HIGHER TO ESCORT THE THREE MEN FROM THE BATTLE AREA AND SPECULATED THAT CPT COOK WAS EVACUATED TO A SURGICAL STATION DUE TO HIS WOUNDS. IN FACT, CPT COOK DID RECEIVE MEDICAL TREATMENT AND DID NOT JOIN SGT BENNETT AND PFC CRAFTS UNTIL FOUR DAYS AFTER THEY CAPTURED (ACTUALLY CPT COOK JOINED THE OTHER TWO MEN ON THE THIRD DAY OF HIS OWN CAPTURE, SINCE SGT BENNETT AND PFC CRAFTS WERE CAPTURED ON 29 DECEMBER 1964, CPT COOK WAS CAPTURED ON 31 DECEMBER 1963, AND THE THREE WERE HELD TOGETHER BEGINNING ON 2 JANUARY 1965). SR COL TRUNG DID NOT KNOW THE DESTINATION OF THE THREE MEN, BUT DURING A SUBSEQUENT ORAL HISTORY INTERVIEW WITH FORMER LTC NGUYEN HONG CHAU IN XUAN LOC, DONG NAI, (SEE JTF-FA MESSAGE, ORAL HISTORY REPORT LTC NGUYEN HONG CHAU) HE INDICATED THAT HIS UNIT ESCORTED TWO OF THE MEN NORTH FROM THE BATTLE AREA ACROSS NATIONAL ROUTE 20 (QL20). IF THE TESTIMONY OF LTC CHAU IS CORRECT, THIS WOULD SEEM TO INDICATE THAT EITHER CPT COOK JOINED SGT BENNETT AND PFC CRAFTS AFTER THEY WERE MOVED ACROSS THE HIGHWAY ON THE EVACUATION ROUTE TO COSVN, OR SGT BENNETT DIED PRIOR TO LTC CHAU BEING INVOLVED AND THE

TWO MEN ESCORTED ACROSS QL20 BY LTC CHAU'S UNIT WERE CPT COOK AND PFC CRAFTS. SINCE THE THREE WERE REPORTEDLY HELD IN THE SAME AREA FOR FIVE MONTHS, THERE MAY HAVE BEEN A DETENTION CAMP IN THE AREA SOUTH OF QL20. DURING PREVIOUS JFA'S, INFORMATION HAS BEEN RECEIVED INDICATING OTHER U.S. PERSONNEL WERE ALSO EN ROUTE TO THIS SAME AREA (E. G. CASES 1318, 1321, 1639). OTHER DETENTION SITES REPORTED PREVIOUSLY IN THE AREA INCLUDE HUY KHIEM (1976 SIGHTING) AND NEARBY DA TRANG (1973 SIGHTING). ONE FORMER CAMP CADRE INCLUDED IN MY NOVEMBER 1991 AND MAY 1992 INTERVIEW LISTS (MR NGUYEN HUNG TRI) REPORTEDLY HAD KNOWLEDGE OF CASES 0049 AND 0050. A RETURNED U.S. POW, MR DOUGLAS RAMSEY, SAID HE WAS INFORMED BY TRI CONCERNING THE DEATH OF CPT COOK (CASE 0050), WHO WAS HELD WITH THE TWO MEN IN CASE 0049. MR TRI WAS INTERVIEWED BY DETACHMENT TWO RESEARCHER/HISTORIAN MR ROBERT DESTATTE DURING 1992, BUT WAS NOT ABLE TO LOCATE ANY INFORMATION CONCERNING CASES 0049 OR 0050 PROVIDED BY MR TRI IN EITHER CASE FILE. DURING FEBRUARY AND MARCH 1992, TWO FORMER CAMP CADRE, MR NGUYEN THANH LAP AND MR NGUYEN THANH CONG, REPORTED THAT FROM 10 TO 13 AMERICANS WERE HELD CAMP "A" IN THE TAN BIEN AREA OF TAY NINH PROVINCE. INCLUDED IN THIS NUMBER WERE CPT COOK AND MR DOUGLAS RAMSEY, A RETURNEE. MR CONG AND MR LAP IDENTIFIED CADRE OF THE CAMP INCLUDING MR TAM HUY AND MR TU MAO. BOTH LE QUANG HUY, AKA TAM HUY, AND TRUONG HUYNH MAO, AKA TU TRUONG, AKA HUYNH KIM TRUONG, AKA TU MAO HAVE BEEN INTERVIEWED, MR TU MAO MOST RECENTLY DURING MY ORAL HISTORY INTERVIEW TRIP IN MARCH 1993. NEITHER OF THESE TWO MEN PROVIDED INFORMATION CONCERNING CASES 0049 OR 0050. MR TU MAO DID INDICATE THAT HE PHOTOGRAPHED THE BODY OF ONE U.S. POW WHO DIED IN CAPTIVITY, BUT HE WAS NOT ABLE TO PROVIDE AN IDENTIFICATION. IT IS POSSIBLE THAT THE POW REFERRED TO BY MR TU MAO WAS CPT COOK. MR TU MAO LOCATED THE POW CAMP ONE KILOMETER FROM THE BO TUC BRIDGE XT 377859. BASED ON THE DESCRIPTION OF MOVEMENT PROVIDED BY VARIOUS WITNESSES THUS FAR, I BELIEVE THE CAMP REFERRED TO BY MR LAP AND MR CONG AS CAMP "A" WAS INITIALLY THE SUBREGION ONE CAMP, WHICH WAS LATER INCORPORATED TO HOLD OTHER POWS FROM EASTERN MILITARY REGION 7. IF THIS IS THE CASE, CADRE FROM THE SUBREGION 1 CAMP, SUCH AS INTERPRETER SAU SON, MEDIC SAU NGA, AND FEMALE NURSE HAI LO, MAY BE ABLE TO PROVIDE INFORMATION TO ASSIST IN LOCATING THE BURIAL SITES OF THE MEN WHO DIED WHILE HELD PRISONER. ALTHOUGH MR TAM HUY REPORTEDLY WAS AT ONE POINT IN POSSESSION OF A MAP OF THE CAMP, AND HE AND MR NGUYEN HUNG TRI REPORTEDLY RECOVERED THE BODIES OF THREE U.S. POWS WHO DIED DUE TO MALARIA, NEITHER MR TAM HUY OR MR TRI DISCLOSED ANY SUCH INFORMATION DURING THEIR INTERVIEWS. ANOTHER CADRE, THE GUARD CHIEF, MR BAO BINH, WAS ALSO INTERVIEWED BY DETACHMENT TWO RESEARCHER/HISTORIAN MR ROBERT DESTATTE, BUT FILES IN MY POSSESSION DID NOT INCLUDE INFORMATION PROVIDED BY HIM CONCERNING SGT BENNETT OR CPT COOK. OTHER CADRE MENTIONED BY MR LAP AND MR CONG DURING THE 1992 INTERVIEWS, SUCH AS MR HOA (I.E. LE HOA) AND MR UC HUE, AKA UT HUE, ARE APPARENTLY DECEASED. DUE TO THE VARIATION IN ACCOUNTS AND THE RELATIVELY LARGE NUMBER OF CADRE INVOLVED, I RECOMMEND THAT THE ELEMENT ASSIGNED TO INVESTIGATE THIS CASE ATTEMPT TO ASSEMBLE MR TAM HUY, MR NGUYEN HUNG TRI, MR BAO BINH, MR NGUYEN THANH CONG, MR NGUYEN THANH LAP, AND MR TRUONG HUYNH MAO AT

ONE POINT, AND THEN TRAVEL TO THE CAMP CEMETERY. DURING MY ORAL HISTORY INTERVIEW WITH SR CO NGUYEN CONG TRUNG, I ASKED CONCERNING HIS KNOWLEDGE OF ANYONE SKETCHING OR PAINTING PORTRAITS OF U.S. POWS. SR COL TRUNG SAID IT IS POSSIBLE THAT AN ARTIST, MR HUYNH PHUONG DONG, PAINTED SUCH PICTURES DURING THE WAR. HE SAID THAT AT THE TIME OF THE INTERVIEW (I.E. MARCH 1993), MR DONG WAS PREPARING TO DEPART VIETNAM FOR A CULTURAL TOUR IN THE U.S.. I RECALL THAT WARTIME DOCUMENTS CAPTURED IN THE AREA OF LOSS FOR THIS CASE INCLUDED A SKETCH OF MR ERSKINE (CASE 1321). I ALSO RECALL THAT DURING 1987, A JOURNALIST FROM AUSTRALIA REPORTED THROUGH BANGKOK BASED AMERICAN JOURNALIST, MR ALAN DAWSON, THAT A RETIRED CADRE IN DONG NAI WAS IN POSSESSION OF PAINTINGS DEPICTING U.S. POWS. I ALSO RECALL REPORTING MY OBSERVATION OF A PHOTOGRAPH DEPICTING A CAUCASIAN U.S. POW ON DISPLAY AT THE CENTRAL ARMED FORCES MUSEUM IN HANOI DURING 1984. A CAPTION ON THE PHOTO INDICATED THE U.S. POW WAS CAPTURED DURING THE BATTLE OF "BINH GIA" DURING DECEMBER 1964. THIS PHOTOGRAPH WAS FORWARDED TO ANALYSTS OF THE JOINT CASUALTY RESOLUTION CENTER DURING 1984. SINCE THE FORMER CADRE TU MAO SAID HE PHOTOGRAPHED THE BODY OF AN AMERICAN WHO DIED IN CAPTIVITY, AND THE CENTRAL ARMED FORCES MUSEUM HAD A PHOTOGRAPH OF A U.S. POW CAPTURED IN THE BATTLE OF BINH GIA DURING 1964 ON DISPLAY, THE VIETNAMESE GOVERNMENT SHOULD MAKE THESE PHOTOGRAPHS, AS WELL AS ANY OTHER RECORDS, AVAILABLE TO U.S. INVESTIGATORS PRIOR TO ASSEMBLING THE FORMER CAMP CADRE FOR A TRIP TO THE FIELD. ALL LOCAL CADRE WHO WORKED WITH ME DURING THE MARCH 1993 TRIP PLEDGED THEIR FULL COOPERATION TO RESOLVE THIS CASE DURING MY NEXT WORKING VISIT TO VIETNAM. I AM VERY OPTIMISTIC THAT THE NECESSARY GROUND WORK HAS NOW BEEN COMPLETED AND ADDITIONAL EFFORTS AT THE LOCAL LEVEL, ALONG WITH A RAPID FOLLOW-UP OF THE LEADS MENTIONED ABOVE WILL BRING IMMEDIATE PROGRESS.

IN ADDITION TO THE LEADS PROVIDED ABOVE, THE FOLLOWING ISSUES SHOULD BE ADDRESSED: ALTHOUGH SR COL TRUNG WAS ASSIGNED TO THE 1ST REGIMENT OF THE REGIONAL HEADQUARTERS (AKA MIEN), HIS UNIT WAS LATER INCORPORATED INTO THE 9TH DIVISION. THE 9TH DIV NORMALLY OPERATED IN THE TAY NINH-BINH LONG-PHUOC LONG CORRIDOR, WHILE THE NEWLY ACTIVATED 5TH DIVISION TOOK OVER THE PREVIOUS OPERATIONAL AREA OF THE 9TH DIV (I.E. THE AREA WHERE SGT BENNETT WAS CAPTURED. THE ELEMENT OF THE 5TH DIV MOST FREQUENTLY OPERATING IN THE CAPTURE AREA WAS THE 2ND REGIMENT. DUE TO THE REQUIREMENT FOR FAMILIARITY WITH THE TERRAIN AND COVERT CADRE SUPPORTING OPERATIONS FOR INFILTRATING NORTHERN UNITS, IT IS LIKELY THAT SOME CADRE FROM THE 1ST REGT, 9TH DIV WERE REASSIGNED TO REMAIN WITH THE 2ND REGT, 5TH DIV WHEN THE 5TH DIV WAS ACTIVATED AND ASSUMED CONTROL OF THE CAPTURE AREA IN 1965.

DURING THE WAR, COMMUNIST FORCES OPERATED UNDER A DUAL CAMP SYSTEM. U.S. PERSONNEL CAPTURED WHILE PERFORMING OBVIOUS MILITARY DUTIES WOULD NORMALLY HAVE BEEN EVACUATED THROUGH A MILITARY SYSTEM OF THE ENEMY PROSELYTIZING (DICH VAN/SOVIET GRU EQUIVALENT) DEPARTMENT SUBORDINATE TO THE GENERAL POLITICAL DIRECTORATE. ANY U.S. PERSONNEL KNOWN OR SUSPECTED TO BE INVOLVED IN INTELLIGENCE DUTIES

WOULD HAVE BEEN EVACUATED THROUGH AN INTELLIGENCE AND SECURITY SYSTEM OF THE MILITARY PROSELYTIZING (BINH VAN/SOVIET KGB EQUIVALENT) DEPARTMENT OF THE INTER-MINISTRY/NATIONAL DEFENSE COUNCIL, UNDER THE DIRECT CONTROL OF THE POLITBURO. THE INTELLIGENCE AND SECURITY SYSTEM WOULD ALSO INCLUDE ANY U.S. PERSONNEL EXPLOITED ON A LONG TERM BASIS FOR PROPAGANDA PURPOSES. THE ENEMY PROSELYTIZING DEPARTMENT WOULD HAVE RECEIVED REPORTS CONCERNING THE CAPTURE, DETENTION, AND INTERROGATION OF ALL PERSONNEL THROUGH THE POLITICAL SECTIONS OF EACH UNIT HAVING CUSTODY OF THE PRISONERS. COPIES OF THESE REPORTS WOULD HAVE BEEN FORWARDED BY MESSENGER, ON UNION SKIN PAPER, TO MILITARY REGION (QUAN KHU), AND THEN ON TO THE GENERAL POLITICAL DEPARTMENT (TONG CUC CHINH TRI) IN HANOI. REPORTS CONCERNING U.S. PERSONNEL PROCESSED THROUGH THE MILITARY PROSELYTIZING DEPARTMENT WOULD HAVE BEEN FORWARDED BY THE SECURITY SECTIONS (BAN AN NINH) OF EACH VILLAGE, DISTRICT, PROVINCE, AND PARTY COMMITTEE REGION (KHU UY), AND FINALLY TO THE POLITBURO IN HANOI. ONLY THE MILITARY PROSELYTIZING DEPARTMENT, AFTER COORDINATION WITH THE POLITBURO, HAD THE AUTHORITY FOR PRISONER SWAPS OR EARLY RELEASES OF U.S. AND OTHER FOREIGN PERSONNEL. ACCESS TO U.S. PERSONNEL BY THIRD COUNTRY INTERROGATORS FOR THE PURPOSE OF JOINT EXPLOITATION OF TECHNOLOGY, OR THE MOVEMENT OF ANY U.S. PERSONNEL TO THIRD COUNTRIES, WOULD NECESSARILY HAVE BEEN COORDINATED WITH THE COMMUNIST PARTY INTERNATIONAL (COMINTERN) LIAISON APPARATUS, SUCH AS INTERNATIONAL LIAISON GROUP 101. CONCERNING THE ISSUE OF REMAINS, ANY REMAINS OR PERSONAL EFFECTS DISCOVERED IN THE CAPTURE OR DETENTION AREAS DURING WARTIME WOULD BE THE RESPONSIBILITY OF THE POLITICAL SECTION OF THE MAJOR UNIT IN THOSE AREAS. ALL SUCH ITEMS WOULD HAVE BEEN RECORDED AND A REPORT SUBMITTED TO THE GENERAL POLITICAL DEPARTMENT. ANY SUCH ITEMS DISCOVERED AFTER THE WAR ENDED WOULD HAVE BEEN THE RESPONSIBILITY OF THE COUNTERINTELLIGENCE DEPARTMENT (AKA OFFICE X-15), OR THE POLITICAL SECURITY DEPARTMENT (AKA OFFICE X-16).

DUE TO THE FACT THAT THERE ARE SEVERAL KNOWN FORMER DETENTION SITES IN THE AREA OF CAPTURE AND INITIAL DETENTION, AND LIVE SIGHTING REPORTS POSSIBLY CORRELATED TO SGT BENNETT OCCURRED AFTER "OPERATION HOMECOMING" CONCLUDED, THIS CASE SHOULD RETAIN THE HIGHEST POSSIBLE PRIORITY UNTIL SGT BENNETT OR HIS IDENTIFIABLE REMAINS ARE REPATRIATED TO HIS FAMILY.