

BACKGROUND PAPER

SOURCE: Mr. Bui Huu Phuoc

- Observed one American prisoner at the large re-education camp for former Republic of Vietnam Armed Forces (RVNAF) officers near Can Tho City, on several occasions during May-July 1975.
- Observed two prisoners who appeared to be Caucasian on a passing sampan in the vicinity of Kinh Nam (Canal 5), Chuong Thien Province. The sighting was brief and the time period could not be established with precision.
- The first sighting, at Can Tho, is definitely Mr. Arlo Gay:
 - Physical description, location, dates, and circumstances are exact correlations to Mr. Gay and his experience.
 - Several former inmates and Arlo Gay corroborate this sighting.
- The second sighting can not be correlated with absolute certainty, because the information supplied by Mr. Phuoc was too vague:
 - The two prisoners were aboard a motorized sampan that passed the sampan on which the source was a passenger, moving in the opposite direction. The prisoners were seated and partially concealed by the sides of their sampan. Their hands were tied and they were dressed in muddy peasant garb. The time was after 1800, and it was turning dark. The duration of the sighting was only a few seconds, and Mr. Phuoc stated he was not able to see the faces of the two prisoners.
 - Mr. Phuoc stated that his belief that the two prisoners were Americans was based on their "appearance."
 - His description of one of the prisoners was identical to his description of the American he observed at Can Tho. He could describe the second prisoner only as shorter with dark hair.
 - In correspondence with a Vietnamese liaison person for the League of Families, Mr. Phuoc stated that the sighting occurred in approximately October 1976. Later, during interviews with the DIA, Mr. Phuoc did not specify a date except to say that the events occurred sometime after April 1975.
- Except for the date, the second sighting closely parallels the experience of Mr. Arlo Gay:
 - There is a Kinh Nam, in Chuong Thien Province, within about ten kilometers of the estimated location at which Mr. Gay was detained for most of May 1975, and enroute between that location and Can Tho, where Mr. Gay was detained during June-September 1975.

- Mr. Gay was transferred together with an RVNAF officer to the Can Tho re-education camp aboard a motorized sampan.
- The preponderance of evidence available to the DIA indicates that Mr. Gay was the only American stranded in this location of Vietnam after 20 April 1975. Sometime after late May 1975, another American, John LeCornec, returned to Vietnam by boat and was eventually detained at Can Tho, where he died. Although we do not know the precise dates and route of his movements prior to his arrival at Can Tho it appears unlikely that he would have been moved by sampan or through the locality described by Mr. Phuoc in his account of his second sighting.
- CONCLUSIONS:
 - The first sighting is definitely Mr. Arlo Gay.
 - The description of the second sighting is too vague to conclude with certainty that the prisoners whom Mr. Phuoc observed were Americans. Although Mr. Phuoc was uncertain of the date of the sighting, the similarity of his account with Mr. Gay's experience suggests that the two prisoners whom Mr. Phuoc observed in the sampan near Kinh Nam, Chuong Thien Province, were Mr. Arlo Gay and the RVNAF officer detained with him as they were being transported to Can Tho in about late May-early June 1975.