

MEMORANDUM FOR RECORD

21 Aug 79

SUBJECT: Conversation with Mr. Arlo Gay

Reference: Telecon of 21 August 1979 between Mr. Arlo Gay and Mr. E. Valentine

1. During recent months many Vietnamese refugee reports have been received which indicate the presence of caucasian prisoners in the U-Minh Forest area following the fall of Saigon. Mr. Arlo Gay is the only American known to have been detained in this area during that time frame. However, specific details concerning his detention there were unknown. Mr. Sieverts at State Department stated that a friend of Arlo's (Mr. William Binns at USAID) would be able to provide DIA with Mr. Gay's telephone number. I called Mr. Binns and explained our problems and he offered to contact Mr. Gay and have him call DIA. On 21 August 1979 Mr. Gay called, following is a summary of the answers he provided to my questions.

2. On 30 April Mr. Gay was piloting his boat from Phu Quoc Island toward Rach Gia. He stopped at Hon Tre Island and was arrested while talking to the Province Chief of Long Xuyen, his Chief of Staff, an ARVN Major and two lower ranking ARVN officers. Gay stated that none of the Vietnamese he was arrested with could have been mistaken for caucasians by other Vietnamese although they could have been mistaken for chinese personnel. He was then taken with the five Vietnamese prisoners by boat to Rach Soi located approximately seven kilometers south of Rach Gia. While he was held there he was observed by a large crowd of curious Vietnamese who had to be restrained at times by the guards. Mr. Gay and the five Vietnamese spent one night and one day at Rach Soi, then they were loaded into a Sampan the following night and taken south into the U-Minh Forest. All six were bound with string and had a plastic sheet over their heads. However, the plastic sheet was pulled off on numerous occasions by curious Vietnamese. Inasmuch as Mr. Gay was moved at night via a circuitous route in a ~~Sampan~~ Sampan and on foot, he became totally lost. However, he stated specifically that he was somewhere in the U-Minh Forest. He was taken initially to a prison camp containing only enlisted ARVN. The next day he and the Vietnamese officials and the ARVN officers were taken to another prison camp some distance away which housed only ARVN officers. Mr. Gay was placed in a cage like detention cell in the center of the camp in solitary confinement for approximately one month. He was only allowed out of the cell to go to the latrine. Approximately a month later Mr. Gay was moved out of camp via Sampan again with the ~~personnel~~ personnel with whom he was captured and made a 28 hour journey to Can Tho. Mr. Gay provided his physical description at the time: 50 years old, was 6' tall, 165 lbs with light brown hair.

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*His boat name is Linh Anh - JRC
 See reference to (in copy) ...*

3. Of note, concerning his detention in Can Tho, was that the ARVN Major detained in the same cell as Mr. Gay committed suicide by hanging himself. Thus it is possible that rumors regarding Mr. Gay's death in camp may be attributed to this event. Mr. Gay also stated that a young Frenchman was brought into camp who was possibly a member of the family who owns the brewery making "Beer 33". However, Mr. Gay could not further identify this individual.

4. Mr. Gay also provided the information previously received in his debriefing regarding a black American in Chau Doc. I informed him that this information was probably based upon the arrest of Herman McDonald who was released in 31 July 1976. Mr. Gay's wife also mentioned an unidentified American who's office was located near the Red Cross building in Saigon in 1975. I informed her that all Americans who had registered with the Red Cross following the fall of Saigon had been released or accounted for which appeared to relieve both Mr. Gay and his wife.

5. The conversation was concluded at this point, amiably, with Mr. Gay volunteering to provide any further additional information which would possibly help us in the future. Mr. Gay is currently located in Hawthorne, California and his telephone number is

Edward D. Valentine
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