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FM CJTF-FA DET ONE BANGKOK TH
TO RUHQHQB / CDR JTF-FA HONOLULU HI
INFO RUMTFS / AMEMBASSY VIENTIANE//CJTF-FA DET THREE//
RUEHPF / USMISSION PHNOM PENH//CJTF-FA DET FOUR//
RUEKJCS / JOINT STAFF WASHDC//OCJCS-PW-MIA/J5//
RUEKJCS / SECDEF WASHDC//OASD-ISA/PW-MIA//
RUHQHQB / USCINCPAC HONOLULU HI//J3//
RUEKJCS / USCINCPAC LA WASHDC//
RUEKJCS / DIA WASHDC//POW-MIA//
RUEAIIA / CIA WASHDC//DEA/SEA/IB/DDO/ICOG//
RUHVAAA / CDRUSACILHI HICKAM AFB HI//
RUFADWW / NSC WASHDC
RUEHC / SECSTATE WASHDC//CA/OCs/CCS/EAP//
BT

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DIA PASS TO DOD POW-MIA CENTRAL DOCUMENTATION OFFICE

SUBJ: SRV ORAL HISTORY, SR CPT NGUYEN CHI CONG

REF: DET 1, JTF-FA MSG 230755Z MAR 93

1. REF WAS THE SUMMARY REPORT OF ACTIVITIES CONDUCTED IN VIETNAM BY JTFFA SPECIAL ASSISTANT, MR G.E. BELL, DURING THE PERIOD 3 TO 19 MARCH 1993. PARA 2.A OF REF PERTAINS TO SR CPT NGUYEN CHI CONG. THE FOLLOWING REPORT PROVIDES THE DETAILS OF THE INTERVIEW CONDUCTED WITH SR CPT CONG.

2. SR CPT NGUYEN CHI CONG WAS INTERVIEWED IN RACH GIA CITY, KIEN GIANG PROVINCE ON 5 MARCH 1993. THE INTERVIEW WAS MONITORED BY ASSIGNED COUNTERPART AND MINISTRY OF NATIONAL DEFENSE (MND) REP, LTC PHAM TEO, AND MINISTRY OF THE INTERIOR (MOI) REP, MR NGUYEN THE CONG. REPRESENTING THE KIEN GIANG PROVINCE PEOPLE'S COMMITTEE WERE VICE-CHAIRMAN, MR TRAN LAM, CHIEF OF STAFF, MR THAI DANG THANG, AND MIA SPECIALISTS, MR BUR QUANG BEN AND MR THAN MINH CHIEN.

3. SOURCE, A 70 YEAR OLD NATIVE OF PHONG DINH, JOINED THE COMMUNIST REVOLUTION TO FIGHT AGAINST THE FRENCH WHEN JAPANESE FORCES WITHDREW FROM VIETNAM AFTER WORLD WAR II. ACCORDING TO SOURCE, AFTER THE GENEVA AGREEMENTS WERE SIGNED IN 1954, HE REMAINED AT HOME IN PHONG DINH AND EARNED HIS LIVING AS A FARMER. SOMETIME DURING 1963, SOURCE WAS CONTACTED BY MEMBERS OF THE REGION COMMITTEE FOR MILITARY REGION NINE AND TASKED TO CONSTRUCT AND MANAGE A PRISON CAMP FOR FOREIGN POW'S. AT THAT TIME SOURCE WAS INFORMED THAT HIS POSITION WOULD BE THAT OF

CAMP COMMANDER.

4. SOURCE CONSTRUCTED THE CAMP IN A MANGROVE FOREST LOCATED IN THE U MINH HA (I.E. LOWER U MINH) IN THE AREA OF BIEN RACH VILLAGE (NOTE: WARTIME US MAPS DO NOT DEPICT BIEN RACH VILLAGE, BUT DO SHOW A TAN BANG VILLAGE AT THE SAME LOCATION REFERRED TO BY SOURCE VIC VR 997533), KIEN AN DISTRICT, KIEN GIANG PROVINCE. (NOTE: AFTER RE-UNIFICATION IN 1976 THE ADMINISTRATIVE BOUNDARY FOR THIS AREA WAS CHANGED, AND THE PRESENT DESIGNATION FOR THE FORMER CAMP LOCATION IS U MINH DISTRICT, MINH HAI PROVINCE. SOURCE RECALLED THAT THE INITIAL CAMP LOCATION WAS NEAR THE JUNCTION OF CANAL NUMBER 21 AND THE SONG CAI LON RIVER (VR 999534). SOURCE SAID THE CAMP WAS DESIGNATED TG36 (I.E. TRAI GIAM 36), AND WAS SUBORDINATE TO THE ENEMY PROSELYTING SECTION, POLITICAL DEPARTMENT OF MILITARY REGION NINE (CUC CHINH TRI QUAN KHU CHIN). SOURCE HEARD THAT ANOTHER CAMP LOCATED IN THE SAME GENERAL AREA WAS DESIGNATED TG35 AND SUBORDINATE TO THE MILITARY PROSELYTING SECTION, POLITICAL DEPARTMENT, MR9. SOURCE HEARD CAMP TG35 HELD ONLY ARVN/3VN POW'S.

5. SOURCE RECALLED THAT THE FIRST TWO AMERICAN POW'S WERE MOVED INTO THE CAMP SOMETIME DURING 1964. HE RECALLED THEIR NAMES AS ROWE AND PITZER (REFNOS 0022-0-21 AND 0022-0-22). ROWE AND PITZER WERE BOTH CAUCASIANS WHO WERE CAPTURED IN THE AREA OF CA MAU. SOURCE RECALLED THAT ROWE WAS AN ENGINEER, BUT COULD NOT RECALL THE BRANCH OF SERVICE FOR PITZER. SHORTLY AFTER ROWE AND PITZER ARRIVED IN THE CAMP, ANOTHER CAUCASIAN AMERICAN POW CALLED VERSACE (REFNO 0021-0-01) WAS MOVED THERE. OTHER AMERICANS WHO ARRIVED LATER INCLUDED JOHNSON (REFNO 0073), TADIOS (REFNO 0047), PARKS (REFNO 0040), WALIYR (REFNO 0006), JACKSON (REFNO 0084), AND A BLACK AMERICAN POW CALLED "ROBAT" (SOURCE'S PRONUNCIATION WAS SOMEWHERE BETWEEN ROBERT AND ROBAT). SOURCE WAS NOT ABLE TO RECALL ANY DETAILS CONCERNING THE PHYSICAL DESCRIPTION OF THE MAN CALLED "ROBAT", BUT DID VAGUELY RECALL THAT HE WAS INITIALLY TAKEN INTO CUSTODY IN TRA VINH AND LATER MOVED TO THE MR9 CAMP.

6. THE FIRST AMERICAN TO BECOME SERIOUSLY ILL WAS CPT VERSACE. SOURCE RECEIVED INSTRUCTIONS FROM THE MILITARY REGION COMMITTEE (KHU UT) TO TRANSFER CPT VERSACE TO THEIR CUSTODY. SOURCE LAST SAW CPT VERSACE WHEN HE WAS TAKEN FROM THE CAMP BY MEMBERS OF THE MILITARY PROSELYTING

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SECTION. ALTHOUGH SOURCE DID NOT SEE CPT VERSACE AGAIN, HE LATER HEARD THAT HE DIED DUE TO ILLNESS. SOURCE DID NOT HEAR ABOUT THE BURIAL LOCATION. SOURCE SPECULATED THAT CPT VERSACE WAS BURIED IN THE AREA OF BIEN BACH VILLAGE, BECAUSE IT CONTAINED THE ONLY SOLID GROUND IN THE IMMEDIATE AREA. THE NEXT TWO AMERICANS TO DIE DUE TO ILLNESS WERE CPT WALKER AND THE BLACK MAN CALLED "ROBAT". BOTH MEN WERE BURIED IN AN EARTHEN FISH TRAP, WHICH WAS CONSTRUCTED BY FORMING A CIRCULAR EARTHEN DAM WITH A LOW SPOT IN THE CENTER FOR TRAPPING FISH AT LOW TIDE. SOURCE RECALLED THAT CPT WALKER WAS BURIED IN THE DAM AT THE FRONT OF THE FISH TRAP, AND "ROBAT" WAS BURIED IN THE DAM AT THE REAR OF THE TRAP. SOURCE SAID HE PERSONALLY BURIED BOTH BODIES. SOURCE RECALLED THAT THE GRAVES DUG AT THE TIME WERE APPROXIMATELY ONE AND ONE-HALF METERS DEEP. SOURCE DID NOT RECALL ANY MARKERS PLACED ON THE GRAVES. SOURCE DID NOT RECALL ANY PERSONAL EFFECTS OR METAL OBJECTS (I.E. ANYTHING METAL TO BE DETECTED BY GROUND PROBE OR METAL DETECTOR). SOURCE WAS ASSISTED BY A STAFF MEMBER NAMED THAI VAN QUAN (QUAAN), WHO LATER DIED.

7. DUE TO ENEMY ACTIVITY IN THE AREA OF T336 CAMP, THE CAMP WAS MOVED FROM CANAL 21 TO CANAL 26 (VR 957567). AFTER ARRIVAL IN THE NEW CAMP, ANOTHER BLACK AMERICAN POW (NOTE: POSSIBLY SGT PARKS, REFNO 0048) ALSO DIED. SOURCE COULD NOT RECALL ANY DETAILS CONCERNING THE BURIAL. SOURCE ALSO RECALLED THAT DURING THE TIME THE CAMP WAS LOCATED ON CANAL 26, SEVERAL PRISONERS, INCLUDING LLT ROWE AND AN ARVN POW NAMED "RAO", MANAGED TO ESCAPE FROM THE CAMP. AIRCRAFT CAME TO THE AREA AND A JOINT US/ARVN FORCE LED BY "MAJ SMITH" AND "MAJ BUNG" ATTACKED ON THE GROUND, SEARCHING FOR THE POW CAMP. DUE TO ENEMY ACTIVITY, THE CAMP WAS MOVED TO CANAL NUMBER 11 IN THE AREA BETWEEN BIEN BACH VILLAGE AND AN BIEN VILLAGE (VR 0077) IN AN MINH DISTRICT. (NOTE: CANAL NUMBER 11 IS NOT DEPICTED ON AVAILABLE SHEET 5928, SERIES L607, BUT BASED ON THE LOCATIONS OF CANALS 9 AND 10, A POSSIBLE LOCATION FOR THE AREA REFERRED TO BY SOURCE IS VR 0275). SOURCE RECALLED THAT SOMETIME DURING 1970 OR 1971, A US NAVY SHIP FIRED INTO THE CAMP KILLING SEVERAL GUARDS. ALSO DURING THIS SAME TIME FRAME, SGT TADIOS (REFNO 0047) ALSO DIED AND WAS BURIED NEAR THE CAMP. SOURCE DID NOT PARTICIPATE IN THE BURIAL OF SGT TADIOS, AND THEREFORE, WAS NOT ABLE TO PROVIDE ANY INFORMATION CONCERNING THE GRAVE. SOURCE RECALLED THAT A CADRE, AND SOURCE'S OWN SON, WHO SERVED AS THE LEADER OF THE PLATOON SIZED GUARD FORCE, CONDUCTED THE ACTUAL BURIAL. SOURCE'S SON, RAI (2) THANH, WAS SUPERVISED BY MUOI (10) THANH, THE DEPUTY CAMP COMMANDER. SOURCE ONLY HEARD FROM HIS SON THAT SGT TADIOS WAS BURIED ON SOLID GROUND, ALONG SIDE A TRAIL NEAR THE CAMP. SOURCE RECALLED THAT SGT TADIOS ALMOST MANAGED TO REACH SAFETY ON ONE OCCASION WHEN HE ESCAPED FROM THE CAMP, BUT HE WAS RECAPTURED BY GUARDS ONLY A FEW HOURS AFTER HIS ESCAPE.

8. CONCERNING US PERSONNEL WHO WERE RELEASED FROM THE CAMP, SOURCE COULD ONLY RECALL THAT SFC JOHNSON (0033) WAS MOVED FROM THE CAMP TO CAMBODIA. SOURCE LATER HEARD HE WAS RELEASED TO THE US. SOURCE VAGUELY RECALLED THAT SSG

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JACKSON (REFNO 0384) WAS ALSO MOVED TO CAMBODIA WHERE HE TOO WAS RELEASED. SOURCE ALSO RECALLED THAT MSG PITZFR (REFNO 0022) WAS RELEASED, BUT COULD NOT RECALL ANY DETAILS.

9. CONCERNING THE BURIAL LOCATIONS OF US PERSONNEL WHO DIED IN CAPTIVITY, SOURCE SAID HE BELIEVES HE CAN STILL LOCATE THE GENERAL AREA OF THE GRAVES OF THE MAN CALLED "ROBAT" AND CPT WALKER. SOURCE SAID THAT SINCE TRAVEL WOULD BE PRIMARILY BY BOAT, AND HIS HEALTH PERMITTING, HE CAN GUIDE A US TEAM TO THE SITE. SOURCE SAID HIS SON HAI THANH IS IN EXCELLENT HEALTH AND WILL BE READY TO ACCOMPANY THE TEAM. SOURCE SAID HE HAS NOT HAD RECENT CONTACT WITH THE FORMER DEPUTY CAMP COMMANDER MUOI THANH, BUT PROVINCE COMMITTEE OFFICIALS PRESENT SAID THEY HAVE MET WITH HIM IN CAN THO, AND THEY BELIEVE HE CAN ALSO BE LOCATED TO ACCOMPANY A JOINT TEAM TO THE SITES. SOURCE SAID THE PRESENCE OF BOTH HAI THANH AND MUOI THANH WILL BE CRUCIAL TO LOCATING THE GRAVES OF SGT PARKS AND SSG TADIOS AT THE FORMER CAMP SITES AT CANALS 26 AND 11. SHORTLY AFTER VISITING THE BIEN BACH AREA ALMOST TWO YEARS AGO,

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Parks 0048
Tadiao 0047
Walker 0046

SOURCE HEARD THAT THE OFFICIALS OF MINH HAI PROVINCE RECOVERED THE REMAINS OF ONE BLACK US POW, AFTER A SECOND ATTEMPT AT EXCAVATION. SOURCE DID NOT HEAR ANY SPECIFIC DETAILS CONCERNING THE CAMP LOCATION OR IDENTITY OF THE US POW WHOSE REMAINS WERE REPORTEDLY RECOVERED. KIEN GIANG PROVINCE OFFICIALS SAID THEY ARE WILLING TO SUPPORT AN EFFORT TO RECOVER THE REMAINS OF THE AMERICANS WHO DIED IN CAPTIVITY, BUT IF THE US SIDE PREFERS, THEY CAN COORDINATE THE RECOVERY EFFORT WITH THE MINH HAI PROVINCE PEOPLE'S COMMITTEE, SINCE THE FORMER CAMP SITES ARE CURRENTLY LOCATED WITHIN THEIR ADMINISTRATIVE BOUNDARY. SA INFORMED THE LOCAL OFFICIALS THAT HE WILL REPORT THE INFORMATION TO HIS SUPERIORS TO ENABLE THEM TO DISCUSS THE SITUATION WITH THE VIETNAMESE OFFICE FOR SEEKING MISSING PERSONNEL (VNOSMP) AND DETERMINE THE BEST COURSE OF FUTURE ACTION. CONCERNING THE REMAINS OF CPT VERSACE, SOURCE SAID HE WAS NOT ABLE TO RECALL THE NAME OF A POTENTIAL WITNESS TO ASSIST IN LOCATING THE BURIAL SITE. ASSIGNED COUNTERPART, LTC PHAM TEO, INDICATED HE WILL ATTEMPT TO LOCATE FORMER MEMBERS OF THE REGION 9 COMMITTEE TO OBTAIN THE IDENTITY AND CURRENT WHEREABOUTS OF A WITNESS.

10. WHEN ASKED CONCERNING HIS KNOWLEDGE OF ADDITIONAL INCIDENTS INVOLVING US PERSONNEL, SOURCE SAID HE RECALLED THAT SOMETIME DURING THE WAR YEARS IN KIEN GIANG PROVINCE, LOCAL RESIDENTS DISCOVERED THE REMAINS OF AN AMERICAN SOLDIER. SOURCE SAID HE COULD NOT RECALL ANY DETAILS, BUT VAGUELY RECALLED THAT THE VILLAGERS TURNED THE REMAINS IN TO US FORCES AND WERE REWARDED WITH AN ELECTRIC POWER GENERATOR FOR THEIR VILLAGE. SOURCE SAID HE RECALLED ONE OTHER INCIDENT WHERE LOCAL RESIDENTS DISCOVERED THE REMAINS OF AN AMERICAN PILOT WHOSE AIRCRAFT CRASHED IN BEN THE DURING 1967. HE SAID LOCALS FOUND THE REMAINS WHILE EXCAVATING THE FOUNDATION FOR A NEW HOUSE. SOURCE SAID THE VILLAGERS WERE CONTACTED BY OFFICIALS FROM THE PROVINCE WHO CAME TO TAKE CUSTODY OF THE REMAINS. (NOTE: SA CONFERRED WITH COUNTERPART, LTC TEO, REGARDING THESE REMAINS AND DETERMINED THAT THE REMAINS REFERRED TO BY SOURCE HAVE ALREADY BEEN REPATRIATED TO THE US; REFNO 0545, HYDE, MICHAEL L.). SOURCE IS NOT AWARE OF ANY OTHER INCIDENTS INVOLVING US PERSONNEL. SOURCE HAS NO KNOWLEDGE OF ANY US PERSONNEL REMAINING IN VIETNAM.

11. COMMENTS:

A. SOURCE WAS COOPERATIVE AND GENERALLY PROVIDED HIS INFORMATION IN A STRAIGHT FORWARD MANNER. SOURCE DID HOWEVER, POLITELY DEFLECT QUESTIONS CONCERNING THE IDENTITIES OF CADRE PREVIOUSLY ASSIGNED TO THE REGION 9 COMMITTEE AND THE GENERAL COMPOSITION OF MILITARY REGION 9. SA GAINED THE IMPRESSION THAT SOURCE HAD BEEN GIVEN THE AUTHORITY TO PROVIDE ONLY THE IDENTITIES OF THE CADRE REPORTED ABOVE. SA WAS CAUTIONED BY THE PROVINCE VICE-CHAIRMAN IN ADVANCE THAT SOURCE WAS IN POOR HEALTH AND COULD NOT UNDERGO LONG INTERVIEW SESSIONS. SOURCE ADVISED THAT HE SUFFERS FROM HYPERTENSION, AND SOURCE CONSUMED A VARIETY OF MEDICATIONS THROUGHOUT THE DAY. DURING A MID-DAY BREAK, SA INVITED EVERYONE PRESENT TO LUNCH, BUT THE

VICE-CHAIRMAN ADVISED SOURCE HE SHOULD NOT ATTEND DUE TO HIS HEALTH CONDITION.

B. OFFICIALS OF THE PROVINCE COMMITTEE WERE VERY COOPERATIVE AND INDICATED THEY WOULD LIKE TO SEE A RAPID RESOLUTION OF THE MIA ISSUE. THE VICE-CHAIRMAN SAID THAT IN HIS OPINION, THE US SIDE SHOULD CONSIDER THE MATTER RESOLVED IN THE CONTEXT OF REMAINING BILATERAL ISSUES CURRENTLY BLOCKING A NORMALIZATION OF RELATIONS BETWEEN THE TWO COUNTRIES. THE VICE-CHAIRMAN SAID THE TWO SIDES CAN CONTINUE TO RESOLVE THE CASES OF AMERICANS STILL NOT ACCOUNTED FOR ON A ROUTINE BASIS. LTC TEO ADDED HIS OBSERVATION MADE DURING A SIGHT-SEEING TRIP TO PEARL HARBOR THAT OVER 2000 US PERSONNEL ARE STILL UNACCOUNTED FOR IN PEARL HARBOR, WHICH IS LOCATED ONLY A FEW KILOMETERS FROM THE HQ OF THE JTF-FA. THE VICE-CHAIRMAN ASKED SA TO PASS ON THE APPRECIATION OF THE PEOPLE OF KIEN GIANG TO THE USG FOR A USG SPONSORED HEALTH PROJECT RECENTLY INITIATED IN THEIR PROVINCE. HE SAID SUCH PROJECTS WILL PLAY A LARGE PART IN HEALING THE WOUNDS OF WAR. LOCAL OFFICIALS INDICATED THEY WERE PLEASED TO HAVE

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A US OFFICIAL VISIT THEIR PROVINCE AND OFFERED THEIR ASSISTANCE FOR ANY FUTURE EFFORTS IN THEIR PROVINCE.

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