Oral History
Hoang Ba Te
Border Security Forces
(Bien Phong)

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ADMINISTRATIVE MESSAGE

ROUTINE

R 270022Z JUL 93 ZYB PSN 407956P31

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SUBJ/INTERVIEW OF REQUESTED SOURCE, HOANG BA TE//

REF/A/FAX/DET/16MAY93//

AMPN/SUBJ: LIST OF PERSONS FOR INTERVIEW-SENATOR KERRY, ENTRY NUMBER 30 OF 83//

RMKS/1. BACKGROUND. ON 12 JULY 1993, A JOINT U.S./VIETNAM ORAL HISTORY PROGRAM INTERVIEW TEAM INTERVIEWED MR. HOANG BA TE, A 55 YEAR OLD HANOI RESIDENT. MR. TE IS CURRENTLY RETIRED, FORMERLY A LIEUTENANT COLONEL (LTC) AND CONTRIBUTOR TO THE HISTORY OF THE BORDER DEFENSE TROOPS, VOLUME I (1959-1979). THE TEAM MET AT THE CENTER FOR INTERNATIONAL NEWS AGENCY COOPERATION, VIETNAM NEWS AGENCY, NUMBER 8 TRAN DAO STREET, HANOI, TO INTERVIEW MR. TE, LISTED IN REFERENCE AS A POTENTIAL SOURCE OF INFORMATION CONCERNING U.S. PERSONNEL MISSING IN ACTION IN VIETNAM. THE U.S. CONTINGENT CONSISTED OF MR. [redacted], DET 2, JOINT TASK FORCE-FULL ACCOUNTING (JTF-FA) CASUALTY RESOLUTION SPECIALIST; AND TSGT [redacted], JTF-FA ORAL HISTORY PROGRAM COORDINATOR. THE VIETNAMESE CENTRAL GOVERNMENT CONTINGENT CONSISTED OF LTC LE KY, MINISTRY OF DEFENSE; AND MR. TRINH QUOC KHANH, MINISTRY OF INTERIOR. MR. LE HAD NOT BEEN INTERVIEWED BY A JOINT TEAM BEFORE.

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2. SUMMARY. THE SOURCE, MR. HOANG BA TE, PROVIDED NO DETAILS CONCERNING U.S. PERSONNEL MISSING IN SOUTHEAST ASIA. HE SUMMARIZED HIS METHODS AND PURPOSES FOR CONTRIBUTING TO THE HISTORY OF THE BORDER DEFENSE TROOPS, VOLUME I (1959- 1979), SOURCE MATERIALS FOR WHICH REPORTEDLY CAME FROM VIETNAMESE NEWSPAPERS AND SOLDIERS. THE SOURCE CLAIMED NO KNOWLEDGE OF U.S. PERSONNEL, LIVING FREELY OR AGAINST THEIR WILL, IN VIETNAM SINCE 1973.

3. DETAILS.

A. AFTER FORMAL INTRODUCTIONS, LTC LE KY EXPLAINED THE JOINT TEAM'S MISSION AND MR. [redacted] BEGAN THE INTERVIEW WITH THE FOLLOWING TWO KEY QUESTIONS:

(1) SINCE 1973, HAVE YOU EVER SEEN OR HAD KNOWLEDGE OF U.S. PRISONERS OF WAR (PW) CAPTIVE IN VIETNAM? MR. TE SAID HE HAD NOT.

(2) SINCE 1973, HAVE YOU EVER SEEN OR HAD KNOWLEDGE OF AMERICAN "STAY-BEHINDS" IN VIETNAM? MR. TE SAID HE HAD NOT.

B. MR. HOANG BA TE (HOANG BAF TEES), HAVING ANSWERED THE FIRST TWO KEY QUESTIONS, CONTINUED TO SAY THAT HE NEVER DIRECTLY PARTICIPATED IN THE WAR AGAINST THE U.S. HE SAID THAT BETWEEN 1964 AND 1969 HE ATTENDED OFFICER TRAINING SCHOOL. AFTER GRADUATING, HE SAID, HE BECAME A CULTURAL INSTRUCTOR AT AN OFFICER TRAINING SCHOOL. HE EXPLAINED THAT HE REMAINED AN INSTRUCTOR UNTIL 1980 WHEN HE WAS ASKED TO PARTICIPATE IN THE WRITING OF THE HISTORY OF THE BORDER DEFENSE TROOPS, VOLUME I (1959-1979).

C. WHILE WORKING ON THE BOOK, HE SAID, HE WAS SUBORDINATE TO THE BORDER DEFENSE HEADQUARTERS, BUT THERE WAS NOT ANY ONE PERSON ACTUALLY IN CHARGE OF THE PROJECT. HE SAID THE PURPOSE OF WRITING THE BOOK WAS TO INTRODUCE THE EVENTS OF THE WAR, SPECIFICALLY BORDER DEFENSE VICTORIES, TO THE TROOPS. HE SAID THE BOOK WAS DIVIDED INTO SIX CHAPTERS. ONLY TWO OF THESE CHAPTERS HAD INFORMATION ABOUT U.S. INVOLVEMENT, CHAPTER 1 (1954-1968) AND CHAPTER 2 (1969-1975). HIS SOURCES OF INFORMATION, HE SAID, WERE STRICTLY NEWSPAPERS, SUCH AS THE PEOPLE'S ARMY NEWSPAPER (QUAAN DOOIJ NHAAN ZAAN), THE PUBLIC SECURITY NEWSPAPER (COONG AN), AND ACTUAL PARTICIPANTS IN BATTLES. HE SAID THAT MOST UNITS USED THE RADIO OR TELEPHONE TO CALL IN THEIR REPORTS

TO THEIR SUPERIORS, THEREFORE HE DID NOT HAVE THESE TYPES OF REPORTS AVAILABLE FOR INCLUSION IN THE BOOK. IF HE WANTED MORE INFORMATION THAT WAS CONTAINED IN THE NEWSPAPER, HE SAID, HE TRAVELED TO THE UNIT INVOLVED AND INTERVIEWED THE PARTICIPANTS FIRST HAND.

D. MR. TE SAID THAT BECAUSE THERE WERE OFTEN SEVERAL BORDER DEFENSE ANTI-AIRCRAFT ARTILLERY (AA) POSITIONS IN A SMALL AREA, NO ONE COULD EVER BE CERTAIN WHICH UNIT SHOULD BE CREDITED WITH

THE SHOOT DOWN OF A SPECIFIC AIRCRAFT. MORE OFTEN THAN NOT, ALL OF THE UNITS WOULD CLAIM THE SHOOT DOWN, HE SAID, LEADING TO INFLATED AIRCRAFT SHOOT DOWN STATISTICS. MR. TE SAID THAT HE DOES NOT RECALL ANY SPECIFIC CIRCUMSTANCES WHERE A U.S. AIRCRAFT WAS SHOT DOWN. HE SAID THAT MOST UNITS ONLY KNEW THE LOCATION, DATE, AND TIME OF SHOOTDOWN. HE CLAIMS TO HAVE NEVER HEARD ABOUT ANY U.S. PERSONNEL BEING CAPTURED BY BORDER DEFENSE FORCES.

E. MR. [redacted] ASKED MR. TE SPECIFICALLY ABOUT BORDER DEFENSE DESIGNATOR 44 AND 93 AND THEIR INVOLVEMENT WITH AMERICAN PW'S. MR. TE SAID THAT HE BELIEVES THAT THESE DESIGNATOR REPRESENT UNITS, WHICH POSSIBLY WERE OPERATING IN THANH HOA, BUT HE REALLY DOESN'T REMEMBER. HE OPINED, ANYTHING THAT WAS DESIGNATED A POST (DOONGF) WOULD NOT HAVE HAD THE MANPOWER TO PARTICIPATE IN PRISONER MANAGEMENT AND IF THESE TWO DESIGNATOR ARE RELATED TO PRISONER MANAGEMENT, THEN THEY PROBABLY REPRESENT UNITS. HE SAID UNIT DESIGNATORS WERE SECRET DURING THE WAR AND UNITS OFTEN USED NICKNAMES AND CHANGED THEIR DESIGNATORS TO HIDE THEIR IDENTITY. HE CONTINUED TO EXPLAIN THAT THE ORGANIZATION OF THE BORDER DEFENSE FORCE IS NOT HIS FIELD OF EXPERTISE, AND HE KNOWS VERY LITTLE ABOUT IT. IF THERE IS INFORMATION ABOUT "44" AND "93", IT SHOULD BE HELD AT THE BORDER DEFENSE HEADQUARTERS, HE SAID. MR. TE ALSO SAID THAT THE VIETNAMESE WAR VETERANS ASSOCIATION MAY BE ABLE TO PROVIDE FURTHER INFORMATION ABOUT "44" AND "93".

F. WITH NO FURTHER QUESTIONS FOR MR. TE, THE JOINT TEAM AGREED TO CONCLUDE THE INTERVIEW.

4. CORRELATIONS TO EXISTING POW/MIA CASES. NONE.

5. POTENTIAL LEADS. NONE.

6. MATERIAL EVIDENCE: NONE. THIS SOURCE BROUGHT NO RECORDS, NOTEBOOKS, DIARIES, OR ANY MATERIAL EVIDENCE ASSOCIATED WITH UNACCOUNTED FOR U.S. PERSONNEL.

7. COMMENTS.

A. THE MEMBERS OF THE JOINT TEAM CONFERRED ON THE QUESTIONS TO BE ASKED DURING THIS INTERVIEW. TEAM MEMBERS AGREED THAT THE NEED TO REINTERVIEW THIS SUBJECT WOULD DEPEND ON WHETHER FURTHER QUESTIONS FOR MR. TE ARISE DURING THE COURSE OF THE ORAL HISTORY
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SUBJ/INTERVIEW OF REQUESTED SOURCE, HOANG BA TE//

RMKS/

INTERVIEW TEAM'S FUTURE WORK.
B. REQUEST THE VNOSMP MAKE MR. TE AVAILABLE FOR REINTERVIEW IF NECESSARY.//

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