Oral History
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ADMINISTRATIVE MESSAGE

ROUTINE

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SUBJ/INTERVIEW OF REQUESTED SOURCE, NGUYEN HONG NIEM//

REF/A/FAX/DET 2/16MAY93//

AMPN/SUBJ: LIST OF PERSONS FOR INTERVIEW, ENTRY NUMBER 31 OF 8

RMKS/1. ON 19 JUNE 1993, A JOINT U.S./VIETNAM ORAL HISTORY TEA
INTERVIEWED RETIRED SRCOL NGUYEN HONG NIEM, A 63 YEAR OLD HANOI
RESIDENT. THE SUBJECT IS A WRITER AND CO-AUTHOR OF THE AIR ANI
THE AIR DEFENSE FORCE MEMOIRS, VOLUMES II AND III. THE TEAM ME
AT THE VIETNAM NEWS AGENCY BUILDING, NUMBER 8 TRAN HUNG DAO
STREET, HANOI, TO INTERVIEW MR. NIEW, A POTENTIAL SOURCE OF
INFORMATION CONCERNING U.S. PERSONNEL MISSING IN ACTION IN VIET
THE U.S. CONTINGENT CONSISTED OF MR. [redacted], DET 2
JOINT TASK FORCE-FULL ACCOUNTING (JTF-FA) CASUALTY RESOLUTION
SPECIALIST; TSGT [redacted], JTF-FA ORAL HISTORY PROGRAM
COORDINATOR; AND P02 [redacted], JTF-FA ANALYST/LINGUIST. THE
VIETNAMESE CENTRAL GOVERNMENT CONTINGENT CONSISTED OF LTC LE KY
MINISTRY OF DEFENSE; AND MR. TRINH QUOC KHANH, MINISTRY OF
INTERIOR. MR. NIEM HAD NOT BEEN INTERVIEWED BY A JOINT TEAM BE

2. SUMMARY. THE SOURCE, NGUYEN HONG NIEM, PROVIDED NO
INFORMATION CONCERNING U.S. PERSONNEL MISSING IN ACTION, OTHER
THAN WHAT HE HAD READ IN OFFICIAL VIETNAMESE NEWS AGENCY

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SOURCES. HE SUMMARIZED HIS METHODS AND PURPOSES FOR WRITING A CHRONICLE OF THE VIETNAMESE AIR AND AIR DEFENSE FORCE, EMPHASIZING THAT THE MEMOIR TYPE INFORMATION CONTAINED THEREIN CONCENTRATED ALMOST EXCLUSIVELY ON THE VIETNAMESE ORGANIZATION'S LEADERSHIP, PERSONNEL, AND OPERATIONS, NOT OPPOSING FORCES. MR. NIEM HAD NO KNOWLEDGE CONCERNING U.S. PRISONERS OR "STAY BEHIND" AMERICANS LIVING IN VIETNAM SINCE 1973.

3. DETAILS.

A. AFTER FORMAL INTRODUCTIONS, LTC LE KY EXPLAINED THE JOINT INTERVIEW TEAM'S MISSION AND MR. [redacted] INVITED THE SUBJECT TO PROVIDE WHAT INFORMATION HE COULD ON THE U.S. POW/MIA ISSUE, BEGINNING WITH THE FOLLOWING TWO KEY QUESTIONS:

(1) HAVE YOU EVER SEEN OR HAD KNOWLEDGE OF U.S. PRISONERS OF WAR IN VIETNAM SINCE 1973? MR. NIEM ANSWERED THAT HE HAD.

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

B. HAVING ANSWERED THESE TWO QUESTIONS, MR. NGUYEN HONG NIEM (NGUYEENX HOONGF NIEMJ) RELATED THAT HE FOUGHT IN THE WAR AGAINST THE FRENCH, BUT AFTERWARDS HE BECAME A WRITER. HE HAS SERVED IN THAT CAPACITY FROM THAT TIME UNTIL THE PRESENT. DURING HIS CAREER AS A WRITER, MR. NIEM STATED, INCLUDING HIS WORK IN RESEARCHING AND CO-WRITING THE AIR/AIR DEFENSE (AAD) BOOKS, HE NEVER MET A U.S. POW, NOR DID HE EVER WORK WITH DOCUMENTS CONCERNING U.S. PERSONNEL MISSING IN ACTION. TO ILLUSTRATE WHY THIS WAS SO, HE EXPLAINED HIS PURPOSE AND METHODS IN WRITING THE BOOKS. HIS ROLE IN THE UNDERTAKING WAS AS A WRITER/COMPILER, NOT A SUBJECT MATTER EXPERT. HE AND THE OTHER AUTHORS SET OUT TO CHRONICLE THE AAD FORCE'S WARTIME OPERATIONS, EMPHASIZING THE ORGANIZATION'S LEADERSHIP, PERSONNEL, AND OUTSTANDING ACHIEVEMENTS AND INNOVATIONS. SINCE THE BOOKS WERE MORE MEMOIRS THAN A HISTORY, THEY FOCUSED ON THE AAD FORCE AND ITS ACTIVITIES, GENERALLY EXCLUDING OPPOSING FORCE'S ACTIVITIES. THOUGH THE BOOKS INCLUDED A SMALL AMOUNT OF INFORMATION DESCRIBING U.S. AIR FORCE STRATEGIES AND TACTICS, THIS WAS NOT THE INTENDED TOPIC. NIEM CLAIMED THE AUTHORS GATHERED SOURCE INFORMATION FOR THE VOLUMES SOLELY FROM OFFICIAL VIETNAM NEWS AGENCY SOURCES (THOONG TAANS XAX VIEETJ NAM), NOT WARTIME JOURNALS OR DOCUMENTS.

C. ANY REFERENCE TO OR QUOTATIONS FROM DOWNED U.S. PILOTS, MR. NIEM CLAIMED, THE AUTHORS ALSO EXTRACTED FROM VIETNAMESE NEWSPAPERS AND MAGAZINES. SOMETIMES THE VIETNAM NEWS AGENCY REPORTED THESE STORIES LONG AFTER THE FACT. AS AN EXAMPLE, HE CITED AN INSTANCE IN WHICH THE AAD FORCE HAD DOWNED A PILOT, ALVAREZ (SEE PARA. 7.C., BELOW), ON 5 AUGUST 1964. THIS INCIDENT DIDN'T APPEAR IN THE VIETNAMESE NEWSPAPERS UNTIL FOUR YEARS LATER. HE ALSO CLAIMED TO HAVE DERIVED INFORMATION ON U.S. PILOTS [redacted], [redacted], AND [redacted] FROM THE VIETNAM NEWS AGENCY.

D. MR. NIEM CLAIMED THAT, DUE TO THE AAD FORCE'S MISSION AND OPERATIONS METHODS, THE ORGANIZATION HAD LITTLE IF ANY CHANCE TO TAKE OR DEAL WITH PRISONERS. UNLIKE PAVN GROUND FORCES, WHO ENGAGED OFTEN IN BATTLE AND TOOK PRISONERS ON THE SPOT, THE AAD FORCE SHOT ENEMY PLANES WITH SURFACE-TO-AIR MISSILES, ANTI-AIRCRAFT ARTILLERY, OR DURING AIR-TO-AIR COMBAT. THE TARGETED U.S. AIRCRAFT OFTEN CRASHED UP TO 20 KILOMETERS AWAY AND, OTHER THAN KNOWING THAT THEY HAD DOWNED THE PLANE, THE AAD UNITS USUALLY NEVER LEARNED THE ENEMY PILOT'S FINAL FATE. COMMUNIST AUTHORITIES IN THE CRASH AREA, NIEM EXPLAINED, MANAGED TAKING PRISONERS, IF ANY, TO TURN THEM OVER TO CENTRAL AUTHORITIES.

E. MR. NIEM CONCLUDED BY EXPRESSING HIS WILLINGNESS TO PARTICIPATE IN FUTURE INTERVIEWS IF NEEDED. WITH NO FURTHER QUESTIONS FOR THIS SUBJECT, THE JOINT TEAM AGREED TO CONCLUDE THE INTERVIEW.

4. CORRELATIONS TO EXISTING POW/MIA CASES.

A. SOURCE'S REFERENCE TO PILOT [redacted] CORRELATES TO CASE 0035-1-01, A RESOLVED CASE, BASED NAME, INCIDENT DATE, DUTY POSITION, AND GENERAL LOSS CIRCUMSTANCES.

B. SOURCE'S REFERENCE TO PILOT [redacted] CORRELATES TO CASE 0055-1-01, A RESOLVED CASE, BASED ON NAME, DUTY POSITION, AND GENERAL LOSS CIRCUMSTANCES.

C. SOURCE'S REFERENCE'S TO PILOT [redacted] CORRELATES TO CASE 0080-1-01, A RESOLVED CASE, BASED ON NAME, DUTY POSITION, AND GENERAL LOSS CIRCUMSTANCES.

D. SOURCE'S REFERENCE TO PILOT [redacted] CORRELATES TO CASE 0146-1-01, A RESOLVED CASE, BASED ON NAME, DUTY POSITION, AND GENERAL LOSS CIRCUMSTANCES.

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 SUBJECT, NGUYEN HONG NIEM, APPEARED SINCERE IN HIS STATEMENTS AND MORE THAN EAGER TO SHARE INFORMATION WITH THE
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SUBJ/INTERVIEW OF REQUESTED SOURCE, NGUYEN HONG NIEM//

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JOINT TEAM. THE JOINT TEAM AGREED THAT, JUDGING FROM HIS STRAIGHTFORWARD STATEMENTS, NIEM APPARENTLY HAD NO KNOWLEDGE CONCERNING U.S. PERSONNEL MISSING IN ACTION.

B. ALL CORRELATIONS DRAWN FROM THIS SUBJECT'S STATEMENTS ARE BASED SOLELY ON HIS NEWS AGENCY DERIVED KNOWLEDGE OF DOWNED U.S. PILOTS.

C. THOUGH THE SUBJECT APPARENTLY SPOKE NO ENGLISH, HE RECITED THE NAMES OF THE FOUR U.S. PILOTS (SEE PARA. 3.C., ABOVE) CLEARLY AND, GENERALLY, PHONETICALLY ACCURATELY.

D. THE MEMBERS OF THE JOINT TEAM CONFERRED ON THE QUESTIONS ASKED DURING THIS INTERVIEW. TEAM MEMBERS AGREED THAT THE NEED

TO RE-INTERVIEW THIS SUBJECT WOULD DEPEND ON WHETHER FURTHER QUESTIONS FOR MR. NIEM ARISE DURING THE COURSE OF THE ORAL HISTORY INTERVIEW'S TEAM'S FUTURE WORK.

E. REQUEST THE VNOSMP MAKE MR. NIEM AVAILABLE FOR RE-INTERVIEW IF NECESSARY.//

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