Oral History
Vu Van Ho
MR T-T-14

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ADMINISTRATIVE MESSAGE

ROUTINE

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SUBJ/LIST OF PERSONS FOR INTERVIEW, ENTRY NUMBER 24 OF 83//

REF/A/FAX/DET 2/12AUG93//

RMKS/1. BACKGROUND. ON 10 AUGUST 1993, A JOINT U.S./VIETNAM ORAL HISTORY PROGRAM INTERVIEW TEAM INTERVIEWED RETIRED SENIOR COLONEL (SRCOL) VU VAN HO, AN APPROXIMATELY 65 YOA TAM DIEP DISTRICT SEAT, NIHN BINH PROVINCE RESIDENT. SRCOL HO IS A FORMER 4TH REGIMENT (REGT), PAVN MILITARY REGION TRI THIEN HUE (MR-TTH) POLITICAL OFFICER. THE TEAM MET AT THE TAM DIEP DISTRICT PEOPLE'S COMMITTEE HEADQUARTERS TO INTERVIEW SRCOL HO, LISTED IN REFERENCE AS A POTENTIAL SOURCE OF INFORMATION CONCERNING U.S. PERSONNEL MISSING IN ACTION (MIA) IN VIETNAM. THE U.S. CONTINGENT CONSISTED OF; TSGT [redacted], JTF-FA ORAL HISTORY PROGRAM COORDINATOR; AND PO2 [redacted], JTF-FA ANALYST/LINGUIST. THE VIETNAMESE CENTRAL GOVERNMENT CONTINGENT CONSISTED OF LTC LE KY, MINISTRY OF DEFENSE; AND MR. NGUYEN VAN THANG LOI, MINISTRY OF INTERIOR.

2. SUMMARY. THE SOURCE, SRCOL VU VAN HO, PROVIDED INFORMATION CONCERNING 4TH REGT, PAVN MR-TTH, ACTIVITIES WITH REGARD TO U.S. PRISONERS OF WAR (PW). HE CLAIMED NO KNOWLEDGE OF PW CAMPS IN MR-TTH OR ELSEWHERE, EXPLAINING THAT HIS UNIT'S POLICY WAS TO TRANSFER PW'S FROM THE FIELD TO REGIMENTAL HEADQUARTERS (HQ) AS SOON AS POSSIBLE AFTER CAPTURE. HE TOLD OF A 1969 INCIDENT IN

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WHICH A 4TH REGT ELEMENT CAPTURED A U.S. HELICOPTER PILOT IN PHU LOC DISTRICT, NINH BINH PROVINCE. AFTER THE PILOT DIED OF WOUNDS RECEIVED DURING A U.S. BOMBING/ARTILLERY ATTACK, THE SOURCE WITNESSED HIS BURIAL ON A MOUNTAIN SLOPE IN NORTHERN PHU LOC DISTRICT. HE PROVIDED A HAND DRAWN MAP DEPICTING THE ALLEGED BURIAL LOCATION. THIS INFORMATION PROBABLY RELATES TO PRIORITY CASE 1402, AN UNRESOLVED CASE. THE SOURCE PROVIDED EXTREMELY LIMITED INFORMATION CONCERNING ANOTHER INCIDENT IN WHICH TWO U.S. PRISONERS DIED IN A U.S. BOMBING ATTACK WHILE TRAVELING TO REGIMENTAL HEADQUARTERS. SRCOL HO CLAIMED NO KNOWLEDGE OF U.S. PERSONNEL, LIVING FREELY OR AGAINST THEIR WILL, IN VIETNAM SINCE 1973.

3. DETAILS. AFTER INTRODUCTORY STATEMENTS FROM THE JOINT TEAM AND LOCAL VIETNAMESE OFFICIALS, THE SOURCE PROVIDED THE FOLLOWING INFORMATION:

A. SRCOL HO BEGAN HIS MILITARY CAREER AS AN ENLISTED SOLDIER AND LATER A PAVN CADRE, SERVING WITH THE 4TH REGT, MR-TTH, IN 1969 AND 1970. AFTER THIS PERIOD, HE TRANSFERRED TO THE PAVN 6TH REGT. HE RETIRED FROM THE MILITARY IN 1990.

B. PAVN 4TH REGT POLICY CONCERNING U.S. PRISONERS CAPTURED ON THE BATTLEFIELD, ACCORDING TO SRCOL HO, WAS TO TRANSPORT THEM

TO REGIMENTAL HQ IN THE REAR AREA AS SOON AS POSSIBLE AFTER CAPTURE. BEFORE MOVING PRISONERS FROM THE CAPTURING UNIT'S OPERATING AREA TO THE REAR, UNIT PERSONNEL, WHEN POSSIBLE, CONDUCTED AN INITIAL INTERROGATION TO EXTRACT BASIC INFORMATION SUCH AS THE PRISONER'S NAME, RANK, AND UNIT. THE CAPTURING ELEMENT THEN REPORTED THIS INFORMATION, ALONG WITH THE NUMBER OF PRISONERS CAPTURED, TO REGIMENTAL HQ VIA RADIO. FOLLOWING A MORE THOROUGH INTERROGATION AT REGIMENTAL HQ, THE PAVN ESCORTED PRISONERS TO TURN OVER POINTS (NFI) FOR TRANSPORT TO DETENTION CENTERS. IN RESPONSE TO QUESTIONING CONCERNING WHY U.S. PW'S WERE NOT DETAINED IN MR-TTH FOR LONG PERIODS BUT QUICKLY TRANSFERRED TO THE NORTH FOR INCARCERATION, SRCOL HO OPINED THAT, DUE TO HARSH BATTLE CONDITIONS, THE PAVN COULD NOT ENSURE PW SAFETY IN THE REGION.

C. SRCOL HO CLAIMED NOT TO BE FAMILIAR WITH THE STRATEGIC ROUTE SYSTEM FOR TRANSPORTING PW'S OR THE LOCATION OR NATURE OF REGIMENTAL OR ANY OTHER PW DETENTION FACILITIES. THE DISTANCE FROM THE FORWARD BATTLE AREA TO THE REAR HQ AREA PRECLUDED HIM FROM KNOWING DETAILS CONCERNING THE REAR AREA AND UPPER ECHELON PW SYSTEM. REGIMENTAL FIELD ELEMENTS, SUCH AS SRCOL HO'S MAINTAINED NO RECORDS ON PW'S.

D. THE SOURCE COULD PROVIDE NO INFORMATION ON PW CAMPS IN LAOS, INCLUDING THE LANG TAO CAMP, OR PAVN RELATIONS WITH THE PATHET LAO.

E. ON THE AFTERNOON OF AN UNRECALLED DAY IN AUG 69, ACCORDING TO SRCOL HO, HE DIRECTLY PARTICIPATED WHEN HIS 4TH REGT

ELEMENT CAPTURED A DOWNED U.S. HELICOPTER PILOT IN NORTHERN PHU LOC DISTRICT. THE PRISONER WAS A CAUCASIAN OFFICER, OVER SIX FEET TALL, HEAVY, HAD LIGHT COLORED SHORT HAIR, AND WORE A GRAY UNIFORM WITH A PLASTIC BADGE OR TAG ON THE LEFT BREAST PORTION OF THE UNIFORM. SRCOL HO SAID HIS UNIT DETERMINED THE PILOT WAS AN OFFICER BY THE MARKINGS ON THE PLASTIC TAG. THE PRISONER HAD A BULLET WOUND ON HIS RIGHT ARM AT THE TIME OF CAPTURE. DUE TO THE LACK OF AN ENGLISH SPEAKING MEMBER, THE PAVN ELEMENT DID NOT ATTEMPT TO INTERROGATE THE PRISONER.

F. THE FOLLOWING MORNING, AFTER REPORTING THE CAPTURE TO THE 4TH REGT HQ VIA RADIO, SRCOL HO'S ELEMENT PREPARED THE PRISONER FOR TRANSPORT TO THE REAR AREA. PREPARATIONS INCLUDED COMPILING A PRISONER FILE CONTAINING HIS IDENTIFYING DATA (NFI) FOR REGIMENTAL H.Q. BEFORE SETTING OUT, HOWEVER, A U.S. ARTILLERY AND BOMBING ATTACK KILLED THE U.S. PRISONER AND THREE PAVN ELEMENT MEMBERS. THE PAVN ELEMENT REPORTED THE PRISONER'S DEATH

TO HQ, WRAPPED HIM IN A CLOTH HAMMOCK AND BURIED HIM IN HIS CLOTHES AND SHOES IN A ONE METER DEEP GRAVE MARKED ONLY BY A MOUND OF PACKED SOIL.

G. THE BURIAL LOCATION, ACCORDING TO SRCOL HO, WAS IN NORTHERN PHU LOC DISTRICT IN THE 4TH REGT'S AREA AT THE TIME OF THE INCIDENT. THE UNIT AT THAT TIME OPERATED GENERALLY BETWEEN THREE U.S. FIRE BASES: PHU GIA (PHUS GIA, VIC 49Q AU 013 842), PHUOC TUONG (PHWOCS TWONGJ, VIC 48Q ZD 119 015), AND MUI NHE (MUIX NHES, UNLOCATED). THE GRAVE SITE WAS SOUTH OF ROUTE 1 ON A SLOPE CALLED RANG CUA (RAWNG CWA, UNLOCATED), NEAR A STREAM WITH A WATERFALL, 5 OR 6 KILOMETERS FROM THUY CAM (THUYR CAM) SETTLEMENT (48Q ZC 152 982). SRCOL HO PRODUCED A HAND DRAWN MAP OF THE BURIAL AREA, COMPLETE WITH PLACE NAMES AND GENERAL CONTOUR LINES. HE INDICATED THE BURIAL LOCATION WAS NEAR THE FOOT OF THE SLOPE, AT LESS THAN 200 METERS ELEVATION.

H. SRCOL HO'S UNIT OPERATED IN THE GENERAL GRAVE SITE AREA THROUGHOUT 1970 AND 1971, BUT HE NEVER RETURNED TO THE SITE, NOR DID HE KNOW OF ANYONE ELSE WHO DID. HE BELIEVED HE COULD LOCATE THE BURIAL LOCATION AGAIN, HOWEVER, AND OFFERED TO DO SO IF REQUIRED.

I. THE SOURCE PROVIDED LIMITED SECOND HAND INFORMATION ON ANOTHER INCIDENT WHICH OCCURRED ON AN UNRECALLED DAY IN NOV 67. AFTER A BATTLE WITH THE U.S. 1ST COMPANY (NFI), THE 4TH BATTALION, PAVN REGT, CAPTURED TWO U.S. ARMY PERSONNEL. WHILE TRANSPORTING THE PRISONERS TO THE REAR AREA, A U.S. BOMBING ATTACK KILLED THE ENTIRE TRANSPORT GROUP, INCLUDING BOTH U.S. AND VIETNAMESE PERSONNEL. THE BOMBING DECIMATED ALL PERSONNEL IN THE GROUP AND THE PAVN WERE ABLE TO LOCATE NO REMAINS WHATSOEVER. SRCOL HO WAS UNSURE OF THE EXACT INCIDENT LOCATION, ONLY THAT IT WAS IN NORTHERN PHU LOC DISTRICT NEAR A BRIDGE.

J. FINALLY, IN RESPONSE TO DIRECT QUESTIONING, SRCOL HO CLAIMED NO KNOWLEDGE OF U.S. PERSONNEL, LIVING FREELY OR AGAINST

THEIR WILL, IN VIETNAM SINCE 1973.

4. CORRELATIONS TO EXISTING POW/MIA CASES. SRCOL HO'S STATEMENTS CONCERNING THE U.S. HELICOPTER PILOT PROBABLY CORRELATES TO CASE 1042, AN UNRESOLVED PRIORITY CASE, BASED ON YEAR, MISSION PROVINCE AND DISTRICT, DUTY POSITION, AND CIRCUMSTANCES OF LOSS.

5. POTENTIAL LEADS. SRCOL HO BELIEVED HE COULD AGAIN LOCATE THE U.S. PILOT'S BURIAL SITE, AND OFFERED TO DO SO IN THE FUTURE, IF REQUIRED.

6. MATERIAL EVIDENCE: SOURCE PROVIDED A HAND DRAWN MAP TO THE ALLEGED BURIAL LOCATION OF A U.S. HELICOPTER PILOT.

7. COMMENTS.

A. ASSOCIATED MAP SEGMENTS: L7014654ll, L7014654l2, L7014664l3, L7014664l4.

B. HAND DRAWN MAP LOCATION COORDINATES: (OTHER THAN THOSE LISTED IN TEXT, ABOVE) THON AN BANG (THOON AN BAWNGF, 48Q ZD 144 005); CAU NUOC NGOT (CAAUF NWOCS NGOTJ (FRESH WATER BRIDGE), 48Q ZD 148 011); XOM DAP (XOMS DAAPJ, UNLOCATED); CAU THUA LUU (CAAUF THWAF LWU (THUA LUU BRIDGE), 48Q ZD 198 011); LAP AN (LAAPJ AN, 49Q AU 855 002).

C. SRCOL VU VAN HO PRESENTED HIS STATEMENTS WITH NO EVIDENCE OF COACHING OR SCRIPTING. THE MAJORITY OF THE INFORMATION HE PROVIDED WAS EXTRACTED THROUGH QUESTIONING, AND IT DID NOT APPEAR AS THOUGH THE SOURCE HAD ANY PRIOR KNOWLEDGE OF U.S. RECORDS CONCERNING CASE 1402. THE HAND DRAWN MAP HE PROVIDED WAS FINISHED PRIOR TO THE INTERVIEW, INDICATING HE HAD DONE SOME PREPARATION AFTER MEETING WITH LTC LE KY DURING THE ADVANCE VISIT FOR THIS INTERVIEW. THOUGH THE MAP WAS CORRECT IN MANY ASPECTS, THERE ARE ENOUGH DISCREPANCIES ON THE DRAWING TO INDICATE THAT SRCOL HO DREW IT FROM MEMORY AND DID NOT COPY FROM A PRINTED MAP. ASSESS THIS SOURCE 'S RELIABILITY AS GOOD.

D. REQUEST THE VNOSMP MAKE SRCOL VU VAN HO AVAILABLE FOR RE-INTERVIEW OR TO LEAD A JOINT TEAM TO THE ALLEGED GRAVE SITE IF NECESSARY.//

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