

Oral History - Hoang Du
Op 559

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PW-MIA-2 CJTF-2

R 100042Z AUG 93 ZYB
 FM CDR JTF-FA HONOLULU HI//J2//
 TO RUEKJCS/SECDEF WASHINGTON DC//USDP:RSA/DPMO-RA/DPMO-RD//
 INFO RHEHNSC/WHITE HOUSE NATIONAL SECURITY COUNCIL WASH DC
 RUEHC/SECSTATE WASHINGTON DC//CA/EAP/VLC/CCS/OCS//
 RUEKJCS/JOINT STAFF WASHINGTON DC//OCJCS/J5/PW-MIA/J3-JOD//
 RUHQHQB/USCINCPAC HONOLULU HI//J3/J30-M//
 RUEKJCS/USCINCPAC LO WASHINGTON DC
 RUEAIIA/CIA WASHINGTON DC//DEA/SEA/IB/DDO/EA/ICOG//
 RUHVAAA/CDRUSACILHI HICKAM AFB HI//TAPC-PED-H//
 RUEHBT/USDAO BANGKOK TH//PW-MIA//
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 UNCLAS //N03460//
 SECTION 01 OF 02
 MSGID/GENADMIN/CDR JTF-FA/J223//
 SUBJ/INTERVIEW OF REQUESTED SOURCE, CAN HOANG DU//
 REF/A/FAX/DET 2/16MAY93//
 AMPN/SUBJ: LIST OF PERSONS FOR INTERVIEW, ENTRY NUMBER 27 OF 88
 RMKS/1. BACKGROUND. ON 19 JUNE 1993, A JOINT U.S./VIETNAM ORA

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 HISTORY PROGRAM INTERVIEW TEAM INTERVIEWED RETIRED SENIOR COLONEL (SRCOL) CAN HOANG DU, AN APPROXIMATELY 65 YEAR OLD HANOI RESIDENT. SRCOL DU IS CURRENTLY RETIRED, FORMERLY A MILITARY ENGINEER WITH TRANSPORTATION GROUP 559. HE ALSO CONTRIBUTED TO THE OFFICIAL PAVN HISTORY OF THE HO CHI MINH TRAIL. THE TEAM MET AT THE CENTER FOR INTERNATIONAL NEWS AGENCY CORPORATION, VIETNAM NEWS AGENCY, NUMBER 8 TRAN HUNG DAO STREET, TO INTERVIEW SRCOL DU, 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. KIETH GARY FLANAGAN, DET 2, JOINT TASK FORCE-FULL ACCOUNTING (JTF-FA) CASUALTY RESOLUTION SPECIALIST; TSGT RONALD D. WARD, JTF-FA ORAL HISTORY PROGRAM COORDINATOR; AND PO2 JOHN HARVEY, 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. SRCOL DU HAD NOT BEEN INTERVIEWED BY A JOINT TEAM BEFORE.
 2. SUMMARY. THE SOURCE, RETIRED SRCOL CAN HOANG DU, PROVIDED NO INFORMATION CONCERNING U.S. PERSONNEL MISSING IN SOUTHEAST ASIA. HE SUMMARIZED HIS ENGINEERING WORK ON THE HO CHI MINH TRAIL, CLAIMING IN ALL HIS EXTENSIVE TRAVELS IN VIETNAM AND CAMBODIA HE NEVER SAW AN AMERICAN. HE AND THE OTHER OFFICIAL PAVN HISTORY OF THE HO CHI MINH

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 TRAIL AUTHORS USED PERSONAL NOTES AND JOURNALS TO COMPILE THE BOOK, AFTER WHICH THEY TURNED THESE ITEMS IN TO THE CENTRAL VIETNAMESE GOVERNMENT. SRCOL DU CLAIMED HE HAD 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. FLANAGAN 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 CAPTIVE IN IETNAM? SRCOL DU REPLIED THAT HE HAD NOT.
 (2) SINCE 1973, HAVE YOU EVER SEN OR HAD KNOWLEDGE OF AMERICAN "STAY-BEHINDS" IN VIETNAM? SRCOL DU REPLIED THAT HE HAD NOT.
 B. SRCOL CAN HOANG DU (CAANS HOANGF ZUJ) EXPLAINED THAT HE WAS A MILITARY ENGINEER FOR THE 42 YEARS BEFORE HIS RETIREMENT, AND DURING HIS EXTENSIVE TRAVELS THROUGHOUT VIETNAM, INCLUDING SOME TIME IN BOTH CAMBODIA AND LAOS, HE HAD NEVER SEEN A SINGLE AMERICAN. HE EXPRESSED HIS BELIEF THAT THE VIETNAMESE GOVERNMENT HAD RELEASED ALL U.S. PRISONERS IN 1973. BEGINNING IN 1968, HE WAS A STAFF AGENCY ENGINEER

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WITH TRANSPORTATION GROUP 559, WHICH OPERATED THE HO CHI MINH TRAIL (AKA TRUONG SON STRATEGIC ROUTE). A ROAD CONSTRUCTION/MAINTENANCE SPECIALIST, DU SUPERVISED WORK ON ALL PARTS OF THE STRATEGIC ROUTE DURING THE WAR, HIS PRIMARY MISSION TO DEVELOP, EXPAND, AND MAINTAIN THE ROUTE TO FACILITATE TROOP MOVEMENT AND RESUPPLY.

C. BETWEEN 1973, WHEN GROUP 559'S MISSION TURNED MORE TOWARDS ECONOMIC REBUILDING, AND 1979, SRCOL DU WORKED IN VIETNAM'S WESTERN HIGHLANDS (TAAY NGUYEEN), WHICH INCLUDE KON TUM, GIA LAI, AND DAC LAC PROVINCES. AFTER THE CHINESE INVADDED VIETNAM IN 1979, DU WAS CALLED NORTH TO PROVIDE ENGINEERING SUPPORT TO ROADS TO THE VIETNAM-CHINA BORDER AREA.

D. MR. FLANAGAN POINTED OUT THAT THE HO CHI MINH TRAIL PLAYED A KEY ROLE IN U.S. MIA SEARCH OPERATIONS, PARTLY DUE TO ITS POTENTIAL LINK TO THE 591 U.S. PERSONNEL MISSING IN LAOS. SRCOL DU EXPLAINED THAT DURING THE WAR, ROAD BUILDING ALONG THE STRATEGIC ROUTE WAS A CONSTANT AND OFTEN DANGEROUS TASK; THE ENGINEERS PAID LITTLE ATTENTION TO ANYTHING BUT THEIR MISSION AND DAILY SURVIVAL. WHERE THE TRAIL RAN THROUGH LAOS, THERE WERE FEW INDIGENOUS PERSONNEL AND THE ENGINEERS, UNFAMILIAR WITH THE REGION, OPERATED FROM POINT "A" TO POINT "B", OFTEN NOT KNOWING EXACTLY WHERE THEY WERE. FOR THIS

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REASON, HE EXPLAINED, IT WOULD BE DIFFICULT FOR HIM TO HELP LOCATE MISSING PERSONNEL IN LAOS, EVEN IF HE KNEW OF ANY, WHICH HE DID NOT. HE OPINED THAT FINDING MISSING PERSONNEL IN LAOS WOULD BE DOUBLY DIFFICULT DUE TO THE HARSH TERRAIN AND SHARPLY CHANGING CLIMATIC CONDITIONS. HE ALSO OPINED THAT THIS PROBLEM, ADDRESSED BY THE U.S. 20 YEARS TOO LATE, COULD NOW ONLY BE HANDLED THROUGH LAO GOVERNMENT OFFICIALS.

E. AS FOR TRANSPORTATION GROUP 559'S WARTIME RECORDS, SRCOL DU RELATED THAT, DUE TO THE GROUP'S UNIQUE MISSION, THEY GENERATED FEW RECORDS OF THE TYPE MAINLINE UNITS USUALLY KEPT. HIS ENGINEERING UNIT USED A GREATER PERCENTAGE OF RECORDS DOCUMENTING WEAPONS AND AMMUNITION THAN ANY OTHER TYPE. HE DID NOT KNOW THESE RECORDS' CURRENT DISPOSITION. HE SUGGESTED THAT, SINCE THE GENERAL DIRECTORATE FOR ECONOMIC RECONSTRUCTION (GDER) CONTROLLED THE GROUP'S MISSION BEGINNING IN 1976, THE RECORDS MIGHT BE IN THAT AGENCY.

F. SRCOL DU AND THE OTHER AUTHORS USED PERSONAL NOTES AND JOURNALS TO COMPOSE THE OFFICIAL PAVN HISTORY OF THE HO CHI MINH TRAIL. THESE MATERIALS, HE CLAIMED, THEY HAD TURNED IN TO THE GDER'S ARCHIVAL DOCUMENTS ELEMENT (BOOJ PHAAMJ TAIF LIEEIJ LWU TRWX) AFTER COMPLETING THE PROJECT.

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G. WITH NO FURTHER QUESTIONS FOR SRCOL DU, THE JOINT FIELD TEAM AGREED TO CONCLUDE THE INTERVIEW.

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

5. POTENTIAL LEADS. SRCOL DU IDENTIFIED OTHER AUTHORS AND CONTRIBUTORS TO THE OFFICIAL HISTORY OF THE HO CHI MINH TRAIL AS FOLLOWS:

A. NGUYEN VIET PHUONG (NGUYEENX VIEETJ PHWONG), A 75 YOA RETIRED SRCOL AND HANOI RESIDENT. (JTF-FA, DET 2 RESEARCHER/HISTORIAN BEGAN AN INTERVIEW, IN SUPPORT OF CODEL VISIT, WITH MR. PHUONG ON 1 JUN 93. THIS INTERVIEW WAS CUT SHORT DUE TO TIME CONSTRAINTS AND WILL BE RESCHEDULED IN THE NEAR FUTURE.)

B. NGUYEN THANH BINH (NGUYEENX THANH BINHF), A RETIRED HANOI RESIDENT AND A MILITARY TRANSPORTATION EXPERT.

C. DONG VAN THINH (DOONGF VAWN THINHJ), A HANOI RESIDENT AND FORMER GROUP 559 REGIMENTAL STAFF OFFICER. (THIS JOINT ORAL HISTORY INTERVIEW TEAM INTERVIEWED MR. THINH ON 19 JUN 93, IMMEDIATELY PRIOR TO INTERVIEWING SRCOL DU.)

D. TRAN HAU TUE (TRAANF HAAUF TUEEJ), AN ANTI-AIRCRAFT ARTILLERY SPECIALIST CURRENTLY RESIDING IN HO CHI MINH CITY. SRCOL

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 RMKS/
 DU SAID THAT TUE SUFFERS FROM AN ILLNESS THAT RENDERS HIM UNABLE TO
 WORK.

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E. PHAM HANG HAI (PHAMJ HAWNGF HAIR), CURRENT WHEREABOUTS UNKNOWN. HAI PROVIDED ADMINISTRATIVE SUPPORT FOR THE PROJECT, BUT WAS NOT AN AUTHOR. SRCOL DU SAID HE BELIEVED MR. HAI WOULD HAVE NO INFORMATION USEFUL TO THIS TEAM.

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 SOURCE, CAN HOANG DU, PROVIDED STRAIGHTFORWARD AND CREDIBLE STATEMENTS CONCERNING HIS WARTIME ACTIVITIES AND LACK OF INVOLVEMENT WITH U.S. PERSONNEL MISSING IN SOUTHEAST ASIA. BELIEVE THE CHANGE OF SRCOL DU PROVIDING FUTURE STATEMENTS USEFUL IN SOLVING EXISTING PW/MIA CASES IS VERY SLIM.

B. THE MEMBERS OF THE JOINT TEAM CONFERRED ON THE QUESTIONS TO BE ASKED DURING THIS INTERVIEW. TEAM MEMBERS AGREED THAT THE NEED TO RE-INTERVIEW THIS SUBJECT WOULD DEPEND ON WHETHER FURTHER QUESTIONS FOR SRCOL DU ARISE DURING THE COURSE OF THE ORAL HISTORY INTERVIEW TEAM'S FUTURE WORK.

C. REQUEST THE VNOSMP MAKE SRCOL DU AVAILABLE FOR RE-INTERVIEW IF NECESSARY.//

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