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Case Summary Information:

Refno : 1523 Name : GRAF, JOHN GEORGE
Service : N LossRank : O4 Date : 11/15/69 Status : XX
Ctry : VS Province : CUU LONG
OffscopeCase : N PriorityCase : Y FateDetermined : Y

Narrative:

On 15 November 1969, CPT Robert White, pilot, and LCDR John Graf, tactical observer, were flying an Army OV-10 aircraft on a daily visual reconnaissance mission of the third coastal zone in South Vietnam. During the flight, CPT White's aircraft was apparently hit by enemy ground fire, and was seen in a steep dive trailing black smoke. CPT White and LCDR Graf ejected from their aircraft and landed in the vicinity of XR735689. They were surrounded and immediately captured. According to CPT White's debrief in 1973 after release by the Vietnamese, they were moved in a southerly direction parallel to the beach. On 18 November they arrived at Camp Alpha, coordinates unknown. On 8 January 1970, both CPT White and LCDR Graf were moved to Camp Bravo, coordinates unknown, and remained there until LCDR Graf's escape on 26 or 27 January 1970. LCDR Graf was never seen again by CPT White, and neither he nor his remains were recovered.

U.S. Government Information:

WartimeLivesight : Y SpecialReporting : N
WartimeCrashGrave : Y WartimeMediaRpts : N
DogtagRpts : N PostwarMediaRpts : N
UncorrelatedRpts : N SignifUsaInfo : Y
RemainsReportedPrior : N

Narrative:

The Dinh Cu Hamlet chief reported that he had lived in old Long Toan District and had spoken with a VC hamlet guerrilla who stated that he personally supervised the burial of an American who had been found floating in the Rach Lang Sac River. The body had been retrieved and buried in the vicinity of XR639649. The grave was on the river bank which had severe erosion problems. A district operation in 1971 revealed that the river had eroded about ten meters which had destroyed the grave site. RPT DATA 14 August 1971. RPT MACDR-72-2, October 8, 1971.

A source, (M82-009, April 1982), who rallied to the GVN in June 1971, told of the burial of a US POW southwest of old Long Toan in the vicinity of XR6587. The POW died by drowning during an escape attempt. The rallier also identified the picture of LCDR Graf from a group of seven photos.

ADO MR IV comment: In November 1973 documents were captured by GVN forces from a VC courier in Vinh Binh Province which confirm LCDR Graf's escape attempt on the night of 14 February 1970. The documents indicated that his body was recovered and buried on 19 February. A rallier signed a sworn statement that he was present at the burial of a US Major (LCDR) who escaped his captors. He said that the body was floated down the river, but came back with the current. The VC then buried the body while he watched. The rallier pointed out the grave site to the GVN forces, but the grave site had been washed away when the river eroded its banks.

In May 1974 a JCRC operation was conducted using five Vietnamese frogmen who searched the river bottom around the grave site pointed out by the rallier in the preceding paragraph. The area around the site was searched for 200 meters on either side and 60 meters out toward the center with no success. The river currents were swift and the bottom was soft silt. The feeling had been that the body might not have been totally exposed and might not have been washed away.

A source, (RP85-027, April 1985), provided information concerning the shootdown and subsequent capture of two Americans in Long Toan District. One individual later escaped, but was found several days later floating in the river. He was buried near the bank.

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A source, (185-096, November 1985), provided hearsay information on an American who had been captured during the war and imprisoned. He escaped, but died attempting to swim across a river. The source was involved in the recovery and reburial of the American's remains.

Joint Investigations Information:

NumberofInvestig :	2.00	JTFWitness :	Y
FoundCrashsite :	Y	SignifInfoJointInvest :	Y
PotentialLocations :	N		

Narrative :

On 4 and 5 June 1989, during the 6th JFA, a joint team investigated Case 1523 in Duyen Hai District, Cuu Long Province. The team interviewed a witness who participated in the capture of Capt White and LCDR Graf and the subsequent recovery and burial of the body of LCDR Graf. The witness claimed that in late 1969 his guerrilla unit had shot down an observation aircraft and captured its two pilots. As a reward he was allowed to keep LCDR Graf's ID card and Naval Intelligence ID card which the witness turned over to the joint team. In early 1970, several months after the capture, the witness heard that one of the American's had escaped. A few days later he saw a bloated body in the Long Toan river which he recognized as LCDR Graf. He and several others buried the body on the bank of the river in the vicinity of XR640646. The bank of the river has eroded over the years, resulting in the washing away of the grave site and the remains of the American. The team travelled to the location and it was apparent that the river had in fact eroded badly at the alleged burial site. No remains were obtained. However, several ID media were recovered as well as a wrist watch and pocket knife which belonged to LCDR Graf.

On 8 March 1992, during the 16th JFA, a joint team investigated Case 1523 in Phuoc Hamlet, Long Toan Village, Duyen Hai District, Cuu Long Province. None of the previous witnesses were interviewed, but three new witnesses were made available. All three witnesses provided firsthand testimony concerning the escape of LCDR Graf from the Tra Vinh POW camp in early 1970. Two of them also provided firsthand information concerning the death of LCDR Graf by drowning and the discovery of his body. One witness provided a firsthand account of his burial on the northern bank of the Long Toan River in the vicinity of XR641646, and led the team to the alleged burial site. The burial site, and thus the remains, have been lost due to the severe erosion of the river. All information received was consistent with the known facts of the case and supports the conclusions of the previous joint investigation. The first witness, Mr. Nguyen Van Tru, was the prison camp commander. He stated that after LCDR Graf's escape, he personally led the search detail. The search party followed LCDR Graf's trail to the bank of the Long Toan River where his body was located three days later in the water, near the shore, caught in a vine. Mr. Tru speculated that LCDR Graf tried to swim the river and drowned due to his weakened condition. Mr. Tru ordered three members of his unit to bury the body on the opposite shore, a distance back from the bank and marked so that it could be easily located. He did not observe the burial. After the war, in response to a government directive to locate the graves of American servicemen, he sent the three men who buried the body back to retrieve it. It was then that the men told Mr. Tru that they had not carried out his instructions. They admitted that they had no way to get the body to the far side, so they buried it on the near side on the bank. That area had since been eroded away by the river's current and the remains apparently lost. Mr. Tru stated that one of the men, Mr. Trong still lived in the area and could verify his statement. When Mr. Trong was interviewed by the team he confirmed Mr. Tru's statement. He added that the men were afraid that a US patrol boat would see them so they wrapped the body in a plastic sheet and buried it near where they found it. No marker was placed on the grave as there was no established procedure for preparing a record or sketch of the site. The third witness, Mr. Le Van Nhon, further confirmed the statements of Mr. Tru and stated that the names mentioned as the men on the burial detail was correct. The team then travelled to the alleged burial site in the vicinity of XR641646. The exact burial site identified by Mr. Trong is now under water 10 meters from the bank. He explained that about 40 meters of the bank has been eroded since the burial. The burial spot has further been eroded 2-3 meters below its level at the time of the burial. The US team leader agreed that the level of erosion seemed to be consistent with the current flow and soil conditions observed at the site. No remains, material evidence, or personal effects were obtained by the team.

Unilateral Information:

UnilInfo :	N	CtryProvidedFilm :	NA
CtryofInfo :	NA	CtryProvidedRemains :	NA

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ValueofInfo : NA SignifInfoUniAction : N

Narrative :

There is no unilateral information in this case.

Knowledgeability Information:

SeaCtryKnowLoss : N

WhichCtryKnew : NA

MoreInfo : N

KnowledgeNarr :

There is no evidence of SRV knowledgeability in this case.

Future Pursuit Information:

FurtherPursuitJust : N CtryForUnilatPursuit : NA

PursueWho : NA HowToUnilat : NA

CtryForJointPursuit : NA TypeOfUnilatLeads : NA

HowToJointPursue : NA KindOfUSPursuit : NA

Narrative :

Future Pursuit Deferred Information:

WhyDeferPursuit : NA

HowWhereOffScope : NA

Narrative :

No Future Pursuit Information:

WhyNoFurther : GD

PrevAttemptRecov : Y

Narrative :

No further pursuit is justified. In 1971 a former VC guerrilla pointed out an alleged burial site of a US serviceman which associates with LCOR Graf. A district operation searched the site in the vicinity of XR639649 and found that the river bank had already eroded 10 meters from the burial site. In November 1973, captured VC documents detailed the escape of a US Major and his subsequent death by drowning. A rallied reported the burial in the vicinity of XR643653. In May 1974 a JCRC operation used five frogmen to search the alleged burial location. Once again they found that the river had seriously eroded, and despite a search of 200 meters on either side of the location and 60 meters toward the center of the river, no remains were found. The conclusion was that the remains had washed away. Two JFA's investigated the case and found that the burial spot has eroded and the remains were probably washed away. The VC who admits to having buried the body took the team to the alleged burial location and the team chief concluded that the level of erosion was consistent with the amounts specified by the witness. The remains were not recovered at the time of loss and by several tries through 1974 prior to the cumulative effect of the severe erosion. The remains are not recoverable as a result of the grave location being destroyed.

INITIALCOORD : A-NO FURTHER PURSUIT

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RECORD1 :

RECORD2 :

RECORD3 :

RECORD4 :