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1971

SUBJECT: Potential Spontaneous Detonation of Captured BLU-82 Bombs

1. The BLU-82 is a 15,000 lb blast bomb filled with 12,600 lbs of explosive gel. The bomb was used to clear helicopter landing zones in Southeast Asia. We have been informed by the Department of Defense that ten BLU-82 bombs spontaneously detonated simultaneously while stored at Sierra Ordnance Depot, Herlong, California. This information has serious implications for the Government of the Socialist Republic of Vietnam which captured 15 BLU-82 bombs from the Government of Vietnam at the time of the fall of Saigon. These captured bombs may detonate spontaneously in time if stored in the open. The last known location of these bombs was the Bien Hoa area.

2. The most likely cause of the explosion at the Sierra Ordnance Depot was an auto-catalytic reaction triggered by excessively high temperatures and solar radiation resulting from long term outside storage.

3. For humanitarian reasons we believe that the Government of the SRV should be informed of the potential danger of spontaneous detonation.

In so doing, the following points should be stressed:

- a. There is no way to determine the condition of the remaining bombs.
- b. The bombs should be destroyed in place if at all possible.