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The Debriefing of Sedgwick Tourison October 11, 1992

Sedgwick (Wick) Tourison currently is an investigator for the Senate Select Committee on POW/MIAs. His responsibilities include doing a case-by-case review of individuals who make up the Committee's list of "133 last known alive" cases, AND the DIA's list of "135 last known alive" cases. Wick worked for DIA as a Vietnamese Language Specialist from 1981 to 1985, debriefing refugees who had first-hand live sighting information on U.S. POWs.

There is some overlap on DIA's and the Committee's lists, but there are a lot of cases that are not duplications. In Wick's study, he is trying to use only declassified information (so the book can be made available to the public) to outline which individuals were last known alive but were not released in the prison system. The study is called the WICK BOOK.

Wick, however, is firm in his personal belief that there is no evidence that proves there are Live POWs. (His views are his own and not shared by the publisher or staff of **THE INSIDER**.) Wick acknowledges that there are discrepancy cases and live sighting reports that have not been resolved, but dismisses the idea that some POWs are alive today. Why?

What follows is a summary of the three hour debriefing of Mr. Tourison that, in part, will answer the question of *WHY* he is not open-minded to the possibility of Live POWs. This information also will give insight into the history of the POW/MIA issue from the perspective of an investigator for the Senate Select

Committee.



Wick disclosed that Col. Dick Childress, a former NSC aide, had co-opted the National League of MIA Families (NLF) to keep the NLF in line - solidly behind administration policy. According to Tourison, Childress brought NLF into the fold. If his assertions are true, it explains why White House position statements are quickly followed by a NLF inducement statement. Basically, Wick confirmed a statement in a February 27, 1985, DIA/IG Report (declassified August, 1992) that "... discussed a situation in which verbal access [not security clearance] had been granted in 1979 to an individual outside the government in an effect to reduce the level of acrimony between the government and the organization which that individual represented."

Wick said that Col. Childress blocked intelligence analysts from writing intelligence summaries IF these summaries were inconsistent with official administration publicly stated assurances. Childress blocked intelligence reports from getting to the President. In fact, according to Wick, Childress gave DIA *VERBAL* orders *NOT* to write reports that resolved some live sighting reports. One example: the NLF employed an interpreter whom DIA identified as the fabricator of three very specific reports. Childress reportedly told DIA *NOT* to write up these findings because they would embarrass the NLF and this was not acceptable.

This information service is designed to help George Bush appointees understand that there are unsolved problems of Americans who were captured alive (POWs) and not released.

Wick further stated that Col. Childress wanted to maintain a Reagan administrative policy advocated by "hard liners" that aimed at preventing normal ties with Vietnam, so Childress asked DIA *NOT* to resolve a large body of reports that were fabrications. Childress told DIA analysts he did *NOT* want to expose a large body of evidence (about 100 sighting reports) as fabrications which were generated by Vietnamese "hard liners" who did not want normalization to move forward. This group of fabricated reports on Live POWs was held secret, unresolved, and used the POW/MIA issue to block progress along a road map that would move towards normal relations. Childress specifically told Wick and other analysts at DIA *NOT* to make a record that would expose these fraudulent reports which were clearly tied to one Vietnam "hard liner" who opposed normal ties with the U.S.

Thus, there was a decision made at the White House (by Presidential advisors in the National Security Council) to manipulate, guide and outline what analytical work *WAS* and *WAS NOT* acceptable for submission to the President. If analytical work was advanced to the NSC, it would *NOT* be shown to the President if the conclusions did not support the pre-set policy, goals, and objectives of the Reagan administration. Instead of intelligence information telling decision makers what views the outside world held, a "middleman" was telling the intelligence community what views he wanted to see expressed, simply to justify current policy goals and statements of public assurance.

The policy set in stone in 1982 that, "We have not been able to prove that there are, in fact, any Live American POWs being held against their will" is the same policy found in place in 1992, even though hundreds of new, fresh live sighting reports have been received each year.



Wick disclosed that DIA has a very good

computer database that lists all POW sightings, and its operators can ask for all data DIA has received on a very specific facility and obtain a computer print out giving sources, date, time, location and number of POWs sighted from all sources of human and electronic reporting.



Wick called Robert Garwood's live sightings fabricated - specifically his sightings at Yen Bi and Garwood's report of Americans being off-loaded from a railroad car. General Eugene Tighe already has given Garwood's sightings a 100% accuracy rating, so it became quite clear during the interview that Wick did not know, in some cases, what he was talking about.

For example, in a discussion about defectors, Wick referred to returned POW Jon M. Sweeny (who was returned after he was taken to Moscow) as having fallen off a ship at sea. Sweeny did, in fact, go to Moscow, but he was captured while he was waiting for a rear unit to arrive. Sweeny was on his first patrol in the jungle; he never fell off of a ship.



Some MIA activists refer to Wick as "the man who wants to make money when normal ties with Vietnam are established". He and his Chinese wife are exporting/importing Vietnamese books in an effort to work through a loophole in the trade embargo that prohibits trading with Vietnam. Wick is a strong advocate of normal relations with Vietnam, and clearly believes the Live POW issue stands in the way of that goal being obtained.

Wick presses heavily for normal ties with Vietnam and stresses fabrication of information to explain away live sighting reports. He also theorizes that the sightings are of non-American Caucasians observed being escorted through bandit-controlled areas by armed guards. These Caucasians may be Eastern European contractors and/or engineers in Vietnam under employment contracts, and not POWs, Wick explained.

Wick claimed that a lot of the sighting reports are related and correlated to Americans who were not involved in the Vietnam War, but were civilians picked up and held as prisoners while Vietnam processed their extradition papers. Mr. Tourison had a number of theoretical excuses for all the sightings.



Wick said that no study had been made of prisons where Americans were sighted, reported and

held during the War, as compared to the debriefings of returned POWs, to determine if there were prison facilities in which American POWs were reported, but no one who came home was held in those prisons. The results of such a study would produce locations where American POWs were held, but not released. DIA should produce just such a study.



Wick said that Roger Shields and Frank Sieverts controlled the Live POW information given to Kissinger in 1973. He said that in 1973 there were 82 discrepancy cases where American POWs were alive in the prison system in Vietnam, but Kissinger was only given 15 files with which to approach the Vietnamese. Thus, the Vietnamese were not put on notice that we knew they had not accounted for a substantial number of U.S. POWs thought to have been alive and in the prison system. Shields and Sieverts blocked U.S. negotiators from using intelligence information that would prove Vietnam had not released all the Live POWs. (Remember, Kissinger testified before the Senate Select Committee on September 22, 1992, saying that if there was evidence of captured Americans, the intelligence community never gave him that information.)

When Vietnam turned over a list (in 1973) of 55 servicemen who died in captivity, the list grew to 113 based upon returning POW debriefings, so it was quite clear that Vietnam was not being totally truthful about what happened to U.S. POWs, and the U.S. was not challenging the trustworthiness of the Vietnamese, due to the withholding of intelligence information and/or inaccurate and incomplete intelligence provided to decision makers.



Tourison's book, TALKING TO VICTOR CHARLIE, and INSIDE FORCE RECON, by Michael Lanning and Ray Stubbe, both cite information about raids, in 1964, along the North Vietnamese coast which were conducted by U.S. Special Operations groups called DeSoto's Patrols and 34A Operation SEAL teams. For example, one night the Marines were returning from a night raid, under fire and being chased by North Vietnamese gunboats. The Marines claim that they pulled in behind the Maddox to avoid being hit; the Maddox was hit by Vietnamese firing in the night. Consequently, the Gulf of Tonkin incident occurred.

If these accounts are true, the Gulf of Tonkin incident was a "provoked response", and the Maddox was not the target of the Vietnamese PT boats.

After Congress passed the Gulf of Tonkin

Resolution authorizing a military response to the "unprovoked attack" by Vietnam on the Maddox, President Lyndon Johnson announced the retaliation bombing on North Vietnam. But, according to Wick, because of a time zone goof-up, Johnson's public announcement preceded the actual bombing by one hour,

Wick first came under investigation in October, 1984, when Michael Van Atta requested that General John Vessey investigate allegations of mistreatment of witnesses by Tourison. The complaint stated that, "DIA was using inappropriate procedures for dealing with those people who were coming forward with information concerning Prisoners of War ... and ... as a result, valuable information was being lost because people were being discouraged from offering further assistance."

thus giving the enemy one hour advance notice.



Wick was asked to comment on a 1981 raid into Laos to locate Live Americans. He refused to respond, but did state that the raid was triggered by false and fabricated reports made by Laotian "hard liners" who did not want to see better ties develop with the U.S.



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Col. Glenn F. Hargis, the DIA-IG (Inspector General), came into DIA to investigate how refugees were treated. By February 27, 1985, the Report was completed and held classified until August 1, 1992. The Report discusses the discouragement of future sources, lack of standard procedures, and mis-focus of effort. The DIA/IG Report, 27 February, 1985, is available via FOIA request to DIA. (Little does Wick know, but he was the man who started several other investigations of DIA's procedures in handling refugees who gave live sighting information.)

What followed was an unprecedented review of DIA's handling of the POW problem. By September, 1985, Commodore Thomas Brooks produced the "Brooks Report" which found that DIA had case files that were incomplete (follow-up action was not pursued), sloppy and poorly kept logs. The Report further stated that DIA had never plotted all sightings on a map. Brooks stated, "I was not at all pleased with the situation I found when I took over responsibility for the POW/MIA issue. The deeper I looked, the less professional the operation appeared." (The Brooks investigation was triggered by an earlier investigation that uncovered several improprieties at DIA - the IG inspection of Wick requested by Vessey.)

By February, 1986, Col. Kim Gaines formed a task force to investigate DIA. The task force found that DIA had an unhealthy attitude, lack of management, and unprofessional working files (sloppy and incomplete). This entire "area of problems" was hidden from public view by classification until the Senate voted (96 to 0) on July 23, 1992, to demand that President Bush declassify all POW information held secret by DIA. (Some 108 live sighting reports, currently under investigation, will remain classified after this declassification process is completed because these reports are believed to be valid by DIA.)

By October, 1986, General Eugene Tighe completed a panel of review of DIA live sightings and concluded that he had seen evidence that all of the POWs had not been released at the end of the Vietnam War (discrepancy cases), and that DIA had received eye-witnesses' accounts (live sighting reports) after 1975

that were deemed valid.



By the summer of 1987, H. Ross Perot had met with George Bush, informed him that there were Live U.S. POWs held against their will in Vietnam, Laos, and Cambodia, and all that remained to be done was to find a way to bring them home. George Bush ignored the advice of Perot (a friend) and turned Perot into the enemy.

The information contained in this issue of **THE INSIDER** outlines the mind-set of Sedgwick Tourion. In his mind's-eye, he precludes the possibility of Live POWs. It is apparent that Wick carries with him a pre-set decision as part of his attitude on the Live POW question; he has a mind-set to debunk all data that comes in on Live POWs. This is the same man who is responsible for the investigation of discrepancy cases for the Senate Select Committee and his pre-set views may taint his conclusions.

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