



DEFENSE INTELLIGENCE AGENCY

WASHINGTON, D.C. 20340



DIA EVALUATION OF POW/MIA INFORMATION
PROVIDED BY VIETNAMESE REFUGEE
(14370)

SUMMARY: Source reported being captured with an American and two VNAF generals while attempting to evade communist troops near Phan Rang Airfield on 17 April 1975.

DETAILS: Source, [redacted], stated that he was a major in the Republic of Vietnam Air Force serving as the chief of staff for Brigadier General Sang, commander of the 6th Vietnamese Air Force Division at Phan Rang Airfield. On 17 April 1975, North Vietnamese troops overran the airfield, and the source was among command section personnel attempting to evade communist troops on foot. General Sang, Lieutenant General Nghi, the American, and the source were subsequently captured and taken prisoner. They were taken north by jeep toward Nha Trang, where they were held in huts for approximately one week. The American and the two generals were then taken away, and the source remained. According to source's guards, the other three were more important, and were taken to Hanoi. He did not see or hear of the American again.

ANALYSIS: The information provided by the source, including specific dates, names, locations of confinement, and description of the American, correlates precisely to the capture of American consular officer James F. Lewis. Lewis was subsequently held at Son Tay Prison, near Hanoi, until his release in October 1975.

EVALUATION: The source has related his capture and detainment with James Lewis in April 1975. James Lewis was subsequently released and is accounted for.

DATE OF EVALUATION: November 1991

POW-MIA CATEGORY: Formerly-held U.S. civilian detainee

BY DIA/POW-MIA

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SECTION 01 OF 02 BANGKOK TH 55485

R91-92

CLASS:
CHRG: DAO 11/13/91
APPRV: DAO:WPKINNEAR
DRFTD: DAO:EMORGAN:KTS
CLEAR: DAO:JMCOLE
DISTR: DORO
ORGIN: OCR

SUBJECT: FIRST HAND LIVE-SIGHTING REPORT OF AN AMERICAN REMAINING IN VIETNAM (U)

1. (U) THIS IS A STONY BEACH MESSAGE. IT FORWARDS INFORMATION OBTAINED FROM A FORMER RE-EDUCATEE WHO IS A BENEFICIARY OF THE ORDERLY DEPARTURE PROGRAM (ODP) WHO ALLEGED TO HAVE SEEN AN AMERICAN IN VIETNAM IN 1975. IT IS SUBMITTED IN RESPONSE TO REQUIREMENT D-VOP-2432-P3-9P. INCLOSURE TO FOLLOW.

2. ON 9 NOV 91, AN INTERVIEW WAS CONDUCTED BY SCI C-224-P154 WITH [redacted], VC 57244, [redacted], BASED ON HIS RESPONSE TO A SCREENING FORM.

3. IN 1975, SUBSOURCE WAS A MAJOR IN THE REPUBLIC OF VIETNAM AIR FORCE (VNAF) WORKING AT PHAN RANG AIR FORCE BASE AS THE [redacted] FOR VNAF BRIG GENERAL (BG) PHAM NGOC (SANG), ((PHAM NGOC SANG)), COMMANDER, 6TH VM AF DIVISION. HE WAS CAPTURED WITH AN UNIDENTIFIED AMERICAN DURING THE FINAL DAY OF THE NORTH VIETNAMESE ASSAULT ON PHAN RANG.

4. WHILE AT THE AIR BASE, SUBSOURCE RECEIVED INSTRUCTIONS TO ARRANGE JOB OFFICE SPACE FOR AN AMERICAN WHO WAS COMING TO WORK AT PHAN RANG. ON 14 APR 75, THE AMERICAN ARRIVED AT PHAN RANG AFB CARRYING A SMALL HANDBAG AND A RADIO TRANSMITTER/RECEIVER SLIGHTLY SMALLER THAN AN ATTACHE CASE. [redacted] DESCRIBED THE AMERICAN AS: TALL, APPROXIMATELY 30 YEARS OLD, DRESSED IN A WHITE SHORT SLEEVE SHIRT AND LONG PANTS, NFL. THE AMERICAN DID NOT APPEAR TO BE A SOLDIER, BUT SUBSOURCE BELIEVED HIM TO BE AFFILIATED WITH INTELLIGENCE. SUBSOURCE SET UP A TRAILER FOR THE AMERICAN AND TO THAT OF BG SANG ON THE BASE. SUBSOURCE DID NOT SEE THE AMERICAN OUTSIDE OF THE TRAILER COPEN, BECAUSE THE AMERICAN STAYED INSIDE AND TALKED WITH HIS RADIO.

5. THE INFORMATION IN THIS PARAGRAPH WAS GIVEN BY SUBSOURCE DURING THE INTERVIEW AND DID NOT APPEAR

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ON HIS SCREENING FORM: DURING THE SIEGE OF PHAN RANG AFB THE DEFENDERS RAN SHORT OF FOOD. THEY HAD SUFFICIENT SUPPLIES OF AMMUNITION BUT NO FRESH FOOD OR C-RATIONS. THE AMERICAN RADIOED TO US NAVY SHIPS AT SEA OFF THE COAST OF VIETNAM AND ARRANGED FOR A VNAF HELICOPTER TO FLY OUT AND PICK UP FOOD FOR THE DEFENDERS. SUBSOURCE FLEW OUT WITH THE PILOT TO A GROUP OF THREE US NAVY SHIPS. SUBSOURCE BELIEVED THE LARGER SHIP TO BE A CRUISER. THE HELICOPTER LANDED ON ONE OF THE TWO ESCORT SHIPS AND HE WENT TO THE LARGER SHIP BY LAUNCH. SUBSOURCE WAS ALLOWED TO PICK WHATEVER HE NEEDED FROM THE SHIP COMMISSARY. THE GROUP OF SHIPS WAS APPROXIMATELY ONE HOUR'S FLIGHT FROM PHAN RANG AFB. SUBSOURCE DOES NOT REMEMBER THE NAME OF THE SHIPS. WHEN THE VNAF HELICOPTER RETURNED TO THE PHAN RANG, THE BASE HAD ALREADY COME UNDER ATTACK.

6. ON THE MORNING OF 17 APR 75, THE COMMUNISTS OVERRAN THE AIR BASE. THE HELICOPTER EG SANG AND SUBSOURCE INTENDED TO USE HAD BEEN DISABLED SO THEY COULD NOT ESCAPE BY AIR. SUBSOURCE, THE AMERICAN, AND OTHERS IN THE COMMAND SECTION ATTEMPTED TO ESCAPE ON FOOT AND HEAD TOWARD THE SEA. AT 1700 HOURS, ON 17 APR 75, THE ESCAPEES WERE ATTACKED AND MOST OF THEM KILLED. SUBSOURCE, THE AMERICAN AND EG SANG WERE NOT INJURED IN THE ATTACK. THE REMNANT OF THE ESCAPEES THEN SEPARATED INTO SMALL GROUPS IN AN ATTEMPT TO EVADE THE COMMUNISTS. THE AMERICAN REMAINED WITH SUBSOURCE AND EG SANG. THE AMERICAN WAS NOT ARMED BUT CARRIED THE SMALL RADIO ON HIS SHOULDER. AT 2400 HOURS, 17 APR 75, THE GROUP WAS AMBUSHED BY THE COMMUNISTS AND SURROUNDED ON ALL SIDES. SUBSOURCE BELIEVES THAT THE AMERICAN DESTROYED THE RADIO AT THIS TIME AS HE DID NOT SEE IT AGAIN. THE AMERICAN, SUBSOURCE, EG SANG, AND LT GEN TRAN VINH (NGHI), ((TRAN VINH NGHI)), WERE ALL TAKEN PRISONER BY THE COMMUNISTS. AT THE TIME OF CAPTURE THE AMERICAN WAS UNINJURED AND REMAINED CALM. THEY WERE KEPT IN SMALL HUTS. BECAUSE IT WAS DARK, SUBSOURCE HAS UNSURE OF THEIR LOCATION. ON THE MORNING OF 18 APR 75, THE COMMUNISTS TOOK THE FOUR PRISONERS INTO A LARGE COCONUT HILL AND KEPT THEM THERE. LATER THAT MORNING THE FOUR WERE TAKEN IN A CAPTURED JEEP TOWARDS NHA

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TRANG TO THE NORTH OF PHAN RANG. THEY STOPPED ABOUT TEN KMS SOUTH OF NHA TRANG. THE AMERICAN WAS KEPT IN A HUT SEPARATE FROM SUBSOURCE AND THE TWO GENERALS. THEY WERE LET OUT OF THE HUT FOR 15 MINUTES TO AN HOUR EVERY DAY. THEY COULD SEE EACH OTHER BUT WERE NOT ALLOWED TO SPEAK. THEIR HANDS WERE KEPT TIED BEHIND THEIR BACKS AND THEY HAD TO GET PERMISSION FROM THE GUARDS TO BE UNTIED TO GO TO THE BATHROOM. THE AMERICAN WAS STILL IN GOOD PHYSICAL CONDITION AT THIS POINT. THE GROUP OF FOUR REMAINED IN THIS LOCATION FOR SEVEN DAYS BEFORE THE AMERICAN AND TWO GENERALS WERE TAKEN AWAY IN A JEEP. SUBSOURCE ASKED THE GUARDS WHERE THEY WERE BEING TAKEN AND WHY HE WAS NOT GOING. HE WAS TOLD THAT THE AMERICAN AND TWO GENERALS WERE BEING TAKEN TO HANOI, AND SUBSOURCE WAS NOT IMPORTANT ENOUGH TO GO. WHILE IN THE CAMPS AFTERWARDS SUBSOURCE ASKED MANY TIMES ABOUT THE AMERICAN BUT NEVER MET ANYONE WHO KNEW OF THE AMERICAN OR WAS WILLING TO ADMIT THAT THEY KNEW OF HIM. EG SANG WAS MOVED TO THE SOUTH SEVERAL YEARS AGO BUT IS STILL IN JAIL SOMEWHERE (POSSIBLY PHAN THIEP PROVINCE).

7. MAJOR _____ WAS BORN _____ IN HACH GIA PROVINCE, VM. HIS ADDRESS IN THE U.S. IS:

8. COMMENTS: THE AMERICAN MENTIONED IN THIS REPORT MAY BE JIM JAMES, A CIVILIAN EMPLOYEE CAPTURED BY THE NORTH VIETNAMESE WHEN PHAN RANG WAS OVERRUN AND RELEASED IN HANOI SIX MONTHS LATER AFTER UNDERGOING AN AGGRESSIVE INTERROGATION REGIME.

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