

Enclosure listing to

1. PW/MIA Automated Extract, 22 Aug 86
2. Negotiation Narrative
3. Information Report, "Captivity...them." 5 Feb 73
4. Information Report, "Group...road." 5 Feb 73
5. Information Report, "All...19th." 17 Feb 73
6. Information Report, "Downed...E2-47." 2 May 73
7. DIA Msg DTG 081853Z Jan 75
8. DIA ltr , 18 Feb 73
9. DIA Msg DTG 212217Z Feb 75
10. DIA Msg DTG 251752Z Mar 75
11. Ltr to Capt. Vodhen
12. ABC TV transcript, 3 Aug 78
13. DIA ltr , 14 Mar 79
14. DIA ltr , 10 Sep 85
15. 56SOW NKP RTAFB Msg DTG 100300Z Feb 73
16. 56CSG NKP APRT Msg DTG 101223Z Feb 73
17. 56CSG NKP APRT Msg DTG 030710Z Mar 73
18. CDR JCRC Msg DTG 070829Z Feb 75
19. CDR JCRC Msg DTG 140600Z Feb 75

FILE DESIGNATION

CONCURRENCES

ANALYST NOTES

10 February 1987

Subject: Loss of BARON 52 and Crew, 5 February 1973

These notes are intended to provide background information to DIA analysts for internal use in evaluating intelligence information that might relate to the loss of Baron 52, and in preparing responses to questions related to this incident. The notes may also be used for interagency coordination and DIA's internal decision making process. Information contained herein concerning Communications Intelligence (COMINT) obtained from National Security Agency (NSA) and the U.S. Air Force Security Service (USAFSS) documents and personnel was released to DIA/VO-PW on the condition that NSA and USAFSS retain originator control over further release of the information.

This document presents a reconstruction of events associated with the loss of Baron 52 and intelligence reporting that at one time was thought might pertain to its crew. The information was obtained by DIA during September-December 1986, through extensive research of Department of Defense archives outside of DIA; interviews with several persons who participated in the search for the aircraft and possible survivors; and interviews with NSA and USAFSS personnel who could provide insights concerning the collection and analysis of the intelligence reports in question.

I. SUMMARY:

Baron 52, an EC-47Q aircraft, and its eight crew members were lost over Laos, on 5 February 1973. On 9 February 1973, a search team inspected the wreckage. Team members saw remains of four crew members in the wreckage, and were able to recover partial remains of one of those crew members. The search team found no indications there were survivors. On 22 February 1973, following a review of the evidence obtained by the search team and other facts associated with the crash, the status of the other crew members was changed to killed in action. In 1978, the Department of Defense released declassified portions of four intelligence documents that some analysts once thought might pertain to the crew of Baron 52. Two of these documents were dated 5 February 1973; the third was dated 17 February 1973; and the fourth was dated 2 May 1973. Misinterpretation of information in those documents has preserved an erroneous impression that there was intelligence information indicating the survival of some crew members of Baron 52.

II. FINAL MISSION OF BARON 52, AND SEARCH AND RESCUE EFFORT.

1. Baron 52 was a WWII-vintage C-47 twin-engine cargo and passenger aircraft modified to use aerial radio direction finding (ARDF) techniques to locate enemy radio transmitters. The aircraft and its four flight crew members were assigned to the 361st Tactical Electronics Warfare Squadron, 56th Special Operations Wing, 8th Tactical Fighter Wing. The four other crew members were U.S. Air Force Security Service electronics warfare specialists assigned to the 6994th Security Squadron.

RETURN FOR FILING TO:

2. Baron 52's mission order for 5 February 1973, was to fly a nighttime ARDF "Tank Smoker" mission in an area designated Area "10G," in Laos. The purpose of the mission was to locate People's Army of Vietnam (PAVN) armored units infiltrating south along the Ho Chi Minh Trail, enroute to the vicinity of Kontum and Pleiku Provinces of South Vietnam. (Comment: Some documents refer to the mission area as "510G." This was a shorthand for "5 February 1973 mission to area 10G.") Several points should be noted regarding Baron 52's last mission:

a. The aircraft normally flew its missions at speeds between 120-150 knots/mph, but not exceeding 150 knots/mph; at altitudes of approximately 10,000 feet above sea level, or at about 5,000 feet above the mountainous terrain in Southern Laos. These speeds and altitudes were well within range of each of the anti-aircraft weapons employed by communist forces in Southeast Asia.

b. Baron 52 did not receive any flight restrictions for this particular mission. Thus, Baron 52 could and indeed did choose to fly outside Area 10G, subject to customary coordination with Moonbeam, an Airborne Command and Control Center (ABCCC), and other aircraft operating in Area 10G and adjacent areas.

c. As was customary for aircraft operating in Laos, Baron 52 had frequent communication with Moonbeam ABCCC and other aircraft flying in the "10G" or adjacent operational areas. For example, the aircraft commander made routine half hourly radio contacts with and reported all unusual occurrences to Moonbeam ABCCC, and was in radio contact with other aircraft in the area. The ~~DATA~~ crew members also used separate communications equipment to maintain contact with another EC-47 aircraft, Baron 62, flying in the same general area.

d. In addition to Baron 52's frequent radio contacts with other aircraft during its flight, each crew member carried a survival radio pre-set to operate on emergency frequency in the event of an emergency. The crew members received intensive training in emergency procedures.

e. Aircraft operating in Area 10G, depicted on the attached map, frequently were outside the range of U.S. ground control radar stations in Thailand and South Vietnam. The nearest U.S. radar stations were "Lion," at Ubon, Thailand, and "Panama," at Danang, South Vietnam.

3. At 2305 hours local time, 4 February 1973 (1605Z 5 Feb 73), Baron 52 departed Ubon, Thailand (Point #1, attached map).

4. At 0010 hours local time, 5 February 1973 (1710Z 5 Feb 73), the Baron 52 aircraft commander was in communication with Spectre 20, an AC-130 from the 16th Special Operations Squadron (16 SOS). They agreed that Baron 52 would fly in the southern portion of Area 10G, and Spectre 20 would fly in the northern portion of Area 10G.

5. At 0039 hours local time (1739Z 5 Feb 73), "Lion" radar station recorded its last radar plot of Baron 52, at coordinates 1452N,10643E (Point #2, attached map). (Comment: Aviators who have experience flying in this area estimate this would be near the outer range of this station; beyond which Baron 52 would not be visible to this station's ground radar. The time elapsed since take off from Ubon, and the distance from Ubon also were consistent with the normal speed of this aircraft.)

6. At 0125 hours local time (1825Z 5 Feb 73), Baron 52 informed Moonbeam ABCCC that several rounds of Anti-Aircraft Artillery (AAA) were fired at Baron 52 from vicinity coordinates 1506N,10650E (Point #3, attached map). Baron 52 was not hit.

7. At 0130 hours local time (1830Z 5 Feb 73), Baron 52 reported operations normal to Moonbeam ABCCC. There is no record that Baron 52 reported its location at that time; and, as noted above, Baron 52 apparently had been beyond the range of Lion radar station since 0039 hours local time (1739Z 5 Feb 73).

8. At 0140 hours local time (1840Z 5 Feb 73), Baron 52 was at its last reported position at vicinity grid coordinates YB 2090 (1517N,10703E) (Point #4, attached map). As noted above, Baron 52 was in radio contact with several different aircraft during its mission; including Spectre 20, Moonbeam ABCCC, and another EC-47 aircraft (Baron 62). Although some documents refer to this as the last radar contact, this last reported location appears to have been reported during Baron 52's last radio contact with Baron 62; in which Baron 52 reported that it had been fired on by "radar controlled 47s (sic); i.e., 37mm or 57mm AAA guns." It should be noted that at this point, Baron 52 was directly over the main north-south artery of the Ho Chi Minh Trail, near its junction with a main east-west artery leading into northern Kontum province, South Vietnam.

9. At 0200 hours local time (1900Z 5 Feb 73), Baron 52 failed to make its scheduled radio contact with Moonbeam ABCCC. Lion and Panama ground control radar facilities, Moonbeam ABCCC, and other aircraft tried unsuccessfully to contact Baron 52 on guard frequencies and secure communications.

10. Search and Rescue (SAR) efforts were initiated at 0215 hours local time (1915Z 5 Feb 73). Within 20 minutes three F4 aircraft, Spectre 20, and Baron 62 were diverted to assist Moonbeam ABCCC and Lion and Panama ground control facilities to conduct visual and communication searches for Baron 52. Additional aircraft joined the search as these efforts continued through the remaining hours of darkness on 5 February and into the following days.

11. On 7 February 1973, SAR aircraft located the wreckage of Baron 52 at grid coordinates YC 143291 (1537N,10700E) (Point #5, attached map). This location was about 20 nautical miles, or approximately 8-10 minutes flying time, north of Baron 52's last reported location; indicating Baron 52 crashed about 10-12 minutes before its next scheduled radio contact with Moonbeam ABCCC. In view of speculation by

some analysts concerning the flight path of Baron 52 and the possibility that some crew members might have parachuted some 65 nautical miles north of the crash site, it is important to note that the facts demonstrate that Baron 52 was flying on a northerly course at the time of the last reported location, and probably at the time of the crash. If, however, as some analysts speculated, the aircraft had circled and was returning on a southerly course when it crashed, it could never have been further north than about 6-10 nautical miles from the crash site. In other words, if any of the crew members had parachuted from the aircraft, they would have had to have landed within a relative close proximity to the crash site.

12. On 7 February 1973, aerial photography and visual reconnaissance missions were flown over the crash site. There were no signs of survivors or indications that the aircraft had attempted a crash landing. The aircraft appeared to have fallen to earth, bounced once, landed upside down and burned. What appeared to be a portion of the tail of the aircraft was located about 100-400 meters from the main wreckage.

13. On 9 February 1973, a SAR force inserted three pararescue specialists (PJs) from the 40th Air Rescue and Recovery Squadron (ARRS) and a radioman from the 6994th Security Squadron (SS) into the crash site to inspect the wreckage of Baron 52. Several points should be noted regarding the inspection of the crash site:

a. The crash site was in a hostile area. One or more missiles were launched against the SAR aircraft as they approached the crash site. Several dozen unidentified persons were observed by the SAR forces within a short radius of the wreckage; the closest only a few meters away. Although the SAR team was unable to determine if these persons were military or civilian, two regimental size PAVN installations, which included AAA forces, were located within 6-9 miles (about 10-14 kilometers) of the crash site. The radioman recalled that he heard gunfire while searching the wreckage. Other members of the SAR force theorized that the presence of several armed escort aircraft discouraged the persons surrounding the crash site from attacking the SAR team.

b. One PJ and the radioman inspected the wreckage. The other two PJs principally provided security.

c. Approximately 40 minutes elapsed between the time the first PJ descended from the SAR helicopter until the last PJ was lifted back up to the helicopter. Reasons for the brief time included the small size of the search team in a hostile area surrounded by a large number of unidentified persons, and the amount of fuel onboard the SAR helicopter.

d. The two men who inspected the wreckage spent no more than fifteen to twenty (15-20) minutes on the ground. Much of that time was spent extracting the partial remains of one crew member from the wreckage, placing the remains in a body bag, and rigging it for lift by a cable hoist to a hovering helicopter. This effort was

hindered by the fact that the remains were badly decomposed and partially pinned under parts of the wreckage that were too heavy for the search team to lift; thus, the search team was able to recover only the head and portions of the upper torso.

e. The rear compartment was not reduced totally to ashes. As the photographs of the wreckage and reports by the search team illustrate, significant portions of the aircraft structure remained largely intact; albeit severely damaged or weakened by the intense fire. It should be noted that over five hours of fuel remained on board when Baron 52 crashed.

f. The search team members did not enter the fuselage of the Baron 52 wreckage. The reasons included concern for possible booby traps, since there were unidentified persons in the immediate vicinity of the wreckage, and uncertainty about the structural soundness of the wreckage.

g. The PJs contemplated tying a sling around the fuselage and using the SAR helicopter to lift the wreckage to search for additional remains, but decided that the structure was too weakened by the fire and would not stand the strain. Time constraints undoubtedly also influenced this decision.

h. The radioman's principal task was to ensure that the classified documents and equipment on board Baron 52 were destroyed. His secondary function was to search for evidence of survivors or remains. He had long experience as a crew member on EC-47Q ARDF missions over Laos, and was intimately familiar with the Baron 52 aircraft. He was personally acquainted with the four electronics warfare specialists in the Baron 52 crew.

i. The PJs who inspected the crash site were specialists whose function was to search for and recover survivors or remains and to determine the cause of the crash.

14. The SAR team concluded that all crew members of Baron 52 perished in the crash. Several observations by the SAR team should be noted:

a. The PJs who inspected the wreckage found the remains of four crew members. Two were in the pilot and copilot seats, respectively. The third was in the engineer's compartment, behind the pilots' cabin. The SAR team recovered portions of this body, which was confirmed to be the second copilot. The fourth body was located near the engineer's compartment. It should be noted that the port and starboard crew positions immediately behind the engineer's compartment were occupied by two of the electronics technicians: SSgt Todd M. Melton, and either Sgt Joseph A. Matejov or Sgt Peter R. Cressman. There were five positions in the area behind the engineer's compartment; three on the starboard and two on the port side. The starboard position behind the engineer's compartment was occupied by SSgt Todd M. Melton. Sgt Peter R. Cressman normally occupied the center position on the starboard.

side; immediately behind SSgt Melton. Sgt Dale Brandenburg occupied the rearmost starboard position; furthest from the engineer's compartment. The port side position immediately behind the engineer's compartment normally was occupied by Sgt Joseph A. Matejov; however, he could exchange positions with Sgt Cressman. The navigator, Captain Arthur R. Bollinger, occupied the rearmost position on the port side, near the door of the aircraft.

b. Parts of the aircraft were observed uphill from the main wreckage. The PJs believed other parts of the wreckage might have been in a ravine bordering the crash site. The size of the search team, the presence of unidentified persons in the immediate area, and the short time on the ground prevented them from checking the parts lying uphill from the wreckage or the ravine.

c. The PJ who inspected the wreckage found what he believed were AAA shrapnel holes in the skin of the aircraft.

d. The SAR team found no evidence that the aircraft had attempted to make a controlled crash landing. The disposition of the wreckage and other features of the crash site (for example, absence of skid marks) indicated the aircraft had plunged nearly vertically to earth, bounced once, landed upside down and burned.

e. The PJs noted it did not appear that the crew of Baron 52 were preparing to bail out when the plane crashed.

15. On 13 February 1973, the Commander, 8th Tactical Fighter Wing, wrote to the next of kin of the several crew members whose remains had not been recovered and expressed his feeling that inasmuch as there was a possibility that one or more crew members could have parachuted to safety, they would continue to be carried in a missing status until a final determination could be made.

16. Because the Wing Commander's letter has been the subject of much comment, it might be helpful to review the context in which he wrote the 13 February 1973 letter. On 9 February 1973, the search team had reported that it had found no indications of survivors. However, the 6994th Security Squadron, to which four of the crew members were assigned, had been informed

METHOD
that possibly indicated some crew members might have survived. Although the classification of the information prevented the 6994th SS from revealing the details, members of the 6994th SS apparently expressed their feelings to the Wing Commander that some crew members could have survived. Several documents reveal that Air Force officials initially believed that under the terms of the recent peace agreement Lao authorities would grant clearance for the Joint Casualty Resolution Center (JCRC) to reinspect the crash site in the near future. Within this context, the Wing Commander might have anticipated that all questions regarding the status of all crew members would be completely and quickly resolved by the recovery of their remains. However, in the meantime the search team's final report apparently had prompted Air Force authorities in the U.S. to initiate a routine review to determine if the status of the crew members should be changed to killed in action.

17. On 20 February 1973, the father of one of the crew members requested that Air Force officials obtain clarification of the Wing Commander's statement regarding the possibility that one or more crew members might have parachuted to safety.

18. On 21 February 1973, a message from United States Air Force Military Personnel Center (USAFMPC), citing the inquiry from the next of kin and noting that casualty reports and other information indicated it was doubtful any crew members survived, directed the field commander to carefully evaluate all known information pertaining to the incident to determine appropriate status of the crew members.

19. On 22 February 1973, the Commander, 56th Special Operations Wing (SOW), in coordination with the Commander, 8th Tactical Fighter Wing (TFW), citing the initial missing in action report of 5 February and the USAFMPC message of 21 February, reported to USAFMPC that he had reviewed the available facts and believed that "there is no reasonable doubt that all the members of the crew of Baron 52 were killed in the crash." Based on the evidence obtained by the search team and the results of this review, Air Force authorities changed the status of the crew members to killed in action.

20. The Commander, 8th Tactical Fighter Wing, informed the next of kin of the change in status and the facts supporting it in a series of letters dated between 24 February and 17 April 1973. In addition to summarizing the events of Baron 52's last mission and the evidence obtained by the search team that inspected the wreckage, the Commander described the several types of radio communications equipment in use on the aircraft. He explained the capabilities of this equipment, and noted that Baron 52 had frequent radio contact with other aircraft until minutes before it became missing. He also noted that the crew members received intensive training for emergencies. Within this context, the Wing Commander expressed his belief that in case of an emergency at least one crew member would have instinctively used one of the many pieces of communication equipment that were available to transmit a distress call or to lead rescue forces to his location; unless the aircraft crashed as a result of some catastrophic incident that immediately and completely incapacitated the crew members.

III. INTELLIGENCE REPORTING.

1. Although the observations of the SAR team and other facts constituted what Air Force authorities and Commanders of the 56th SOW and 8th TFW believed to be compelling evidence that none of the crew members survived the crash of Baron 52; two ^{SOURCE} reports led others to speculate that the four electronics specialists could have survived. One of the reports was obtained about 5.5 to 6 hours after the crash of Baron 52, and the other was obtained 10 days later, on 15 February 1973. These two reports were the subject of the four documents, cited in Section I, BACKGROUND, above, which led some to believe there was intelligence indicating that some crew members of Baron 52 survived. The following paragraphs present a reconstruction of the acquisition, reporting and interpretation of those intelligence reports.

2. About 5.5 to 6 hours after Baron 52 crashed,

METHOD in which a North Vietnamese People's Army of Vietnam (PAVN) element reported that a PAVN Group was holding four captives of unspecified nationality. The intelligence unit that acquired the information published two versions of this information in two ^{SOURCE} reports dated 5 February 1973:

a. The first version was ^{METHOD} issued by the field collector about 46 minutes after the information was acquired. The information consisted of one sentence reporting that: "Group 217 is holding four pilots captive, and the Group is requesting orders concerning what to do with them from an unidentified unit probably subordinate to the 559th."

b. The second version, which was the first and final follow-up to the interim report, was issued by the headquarters of the collecting element several hours later and also consisted of a single sentence: "Presently Group 210 has four pirates; they are going to the control of Mr. Van, they are going from 44 to 93, they are having difficulties moving along the road."

3. The analysis appended to the first version indicated that other transmissions on the same frequency indicated the unit holding the prisoners was possibly located near the city of Vinh (Point #6, attached map), North Vietnam. Vinh is more than 400 kilometers (about 250 miles) by road north of the crashsite.

a. DIA's research took note of the fact that the initial report ^{METHOD} the Group designation as "217," while the final report ^{METHOD} it as "210." Also, subsequent ^{SOURCES} referred to the Group as "unidentified Group 210 or 210B." The use of the term "210B" appears to have been an attempt to reconcile the two ^{METHOD} since in spoken Vietnamese the terms "217" and "210B" are ^{DATA} similar.

b. Analysts were never able to correlate the Group designations to

any specific PAVN element; however, research confirmed that two ^{DATA} ^{DATA} stations in North Vietnam. These stations served also as ^{DATA} relays; therefore, it is theoretically possible one of the ^{DATA} stations was acting as a relay for a station in Laos. However, research indicated this was unlikely. In any event, this is a moot point, since the ^{SC} stated the prisoners presently were held by Group 217/210B/210; and all analyses indicated that Group 217/210B/210 probably was located in North Vietnam, probably near Vinh.

4. The analysis appended to the second version added the speculation that "44" and "93" were unlocated kilometer markers. This analysis also observed that the term "pirates" usually refers to American pilots. Additionally, the analysis speculated that "Mr. Van" was possibly associated with Military Station (Binh Tram/BT) 14 (Point #7, attached map), a PAVN installation in the Ban Karai Pass, in North Vietnam. This speculation implicitly suggests that the prisoners were enroute to BT 14. BT 14 was located more than 230 kilometers (about 145 miles) north of the crash site. This analysis did not address the question of the current location of the prisoners, implying concurrence with the initial analysis that Group 217/210/210B, which the text said was presently holding the captives, was possibly located in the vicinity of Vinh. In any event, all subsequent analyses concurred that this Group was probably located in North Vietnam.

5. On 6 February 1973, Headquarters U.S. Air Force Security Service (USAFSS), at Kelly AFB, TX, inquired whether ^{ANALYSTS} believed the 5 February ^{SOURCE} was related to the loss of Baron 52. The USAFSS noted the inquiry was prompted by the fact that the ^{DATA} was acquired shortly after Baron 52 was reported missing. It is important to note that the Hq USAFSS had not received the full ^{DATA}. The USAFSS inquiry noted that USAFSS learned of the ^{SOURCE} through its receipt of a Post Mission Flight Report (PMFR) from the USAFSS unit that acquired the ^{DATA}.

METHOD

6. On 8 February 1973, an ^{ANALYST} published a third version of the ^{DATA} acquired on 5 February. According to this version: "Concern over the movement of four captured fliers of unknown nationality was expressed in a 5 February report from an unidentified Group 210 to an unidentified Rear Services element. According to the report the fliers were to be transferred from 44 ... to 93..."

7. The ^{ANALYST} integrated into the third version an expansion of the field analyst's earlier speculation that 44 and 93 might be unlocated kilometer markers; but disregarded the field analyst's suggestion that the prisoners were possibly enroute to BT 14. The ^{ANALYST} conjectured that "44" and "93" probably were: "KM 44 (XD 495254, 16-30N 106-2E) on Route 914," and, "KM 93 (XD 549505, 16-43N

106-27E) on Route 1032," in Laos; i.e., about 120 and 135 kilometers (75 and 85 miles; Points #8 and 9, attached map), respectively, north of the crash site. He also speculated that "the fliers are probably enroute to the BT 9 area, since two unidentified personalities at BT 9 were to be contacted about their movement." BT 9 (Point #10, attached map), at that time, was located vicinity 1702N 10612E, in Laos, about 180 kilometers (about 112 miles) north of the crash site.

8. In a message dated on or about 12 February 1973, Headquarters U.S. Air Force Security Service (USAFSS) noted the use of the term "fliers," which first appeared in the third version of the DATA, and cited as fact the ANALYST'S speculation concerning the meaning of "44" and "93," as basis for conjecture that the 5 February SOURCE might relate to crew members of Baron 52.

a. The USAFSS message expressed belief that the use of the term "fliers," which first appeared in the third version of the 5 February SOURCE, might indicate the prisoners were enlisted men; and noted parenthetically that the four USAFSS crew members aboard Baron 52 were enlisted men.

b. Noting that kilometer (KM) 44 is approximately 65 nautical miles (NM) from the crash site, the Hq USAFSS message expressed the belief that depending on the flight path of Baron 52, and prevailing winds, the USAFSS crew members could have bailed out and possibly been carried north by the winds. The message speculated that Baron 52 was on a southeasterly course at the time of impact, which could have put the possible bail-out point considerably closer to KM-44.

c. The message indicated that the reasoning that led to this conjecture about the flight path and winds, was a recognition that if the crew had bailed out near the crash site, it was "unreasonable that crew members could have been 65NM from the crash site the following day -- either under their own power or as prisoners."

9. On 14 February 1973, the ANALYST who published the third (8 February) version of the DATA responded to Hq USAFSS's 12 February 1973 message and presented a further expansion of the speculation.

a. For example, the DATA stated that "vehicle transportation for the prisoners was indicated;" although the SOURCE does not contain any reference to vehicles. From this unsubstantiated premise, however, the analyst reasoned that because four and one half hours (sic) lapsed between the time of the last contact with the aircraft and the time the intelligence was acquired, "it is possible that (the four prisoners) are the crew of the EC-47."

b. In what he described as a recap of the 5 February SOURCE, noting there had been no additional DATA, the ANALYST added several more items of information that were not present in

the reported text of the DATA. For example, he stated two unidentified personalities in the BT 9 area were to be contacted concerning movement of the prisoners; and, if problems were encountered, higher headquarters (which he described as a probable reference to trucks) were to move the fliers. Continuing with his "recap," the analyst stated the DATA contained instructions that the fliers be given sufficient water; and that, "Specifically, an unidentified personality associated with an unidentified Group 210, or Group 210B, probably in North Vietnam, DATA that there had been some difficulties in transporting the fliers and asked that the BT 9 personalities check to see if these problems had been resolved so movement could continue. The Group 210 personality also asked that he be notified of their time of departure, as he was waiting for them." It is important to recall that the reported DATA contained only one sentence.

c. In contrast to the ANALYST'S references to several personalities, the SOURCE named only one: a "Mr. Van." It should be noted also that "Van" is only a given name; as common as "Jim" or "Bill" would be to Americans. It would be impossible to make a definitive correlation between a "Mr. Van" and any specific PAVN element.

d. In addition to the inconsistent references to numbers of personalities, we also should note the inconsistencies of the attempts to correlate personalities to locations or PAVN elements. The reported text of the DATA stated the prisoners were going to the control of Mr. Van. The field analyst had reported that Mr. Van was possibly associated with BT 14; implying, therefore, that the prisoners were enroute to BT 14. Later, without citing any names, the ANALYST inferred that the fliers probably were enroute to the BT 9 area, "since two unidentified personalities at BT 9 were to be contacted about their movement." In a subsequent DATA, again without citing a specific name, the ANALYST inferred that the ultimate destination of the fliers was Group 210 or 210B, probably in North Vietnam, since (according to the ANALYST'S version of the DATA) an unidentified personality associated with that Group asked that he be notified of their departure time as he was waiting for them. Compounding this inconsistency, it should be recalled that the reported SOURCE indicated that Group 210 was holding the prisoners, not waiting for them.

10. In messages dated 16 and 27 February 1973, HQ USAFSS shared the preceding speculations by Hq USAFSS and ANALYST with the 6994th Security Squadron, the unit to which the four USAFSS crew members of Baron 52 had been assigned. It is important to note that, like the Hq USAFSS, the 6994th SS did not receive the original DATA. As a result of the information they did receive, members of the 6994th SS began to reassess the facts associated with the loss of Baron 52.

a. For example, the radioman who participated in the inspection of the wreckage told DIA that although the evidence he observed at the

crash site had convinced him none of the crew members could have survived, the information the 6994th SS subsequently received concerning the 5 February 1973 ~~SOURCE~~ caused him to change his mind.

b. Messages and other documents prepared by Hq USAFSS and the 6994th SS indicate they began to question whether the PJs saw four remains in the wreckage, because the radioman had not seen the fourth body. The 6994th expressed doubt about the PJ's ability to correctly identify shrapnel holes in the aircraft, because of the fire damage. The radioman theorized that the USAFSS crew members could have bailed out because he did not find the rear cargo door or fragments of uniform and parachute harnesses in the cargo compartment (this theory disregarded the fact that the search team was not able to inspect parts of the wreckage that were scattered up to 400 meters away from the main wreckage, and that the team members did not enter the fuselage).

c. Rumors also influenced the perceptions of members of the 6994th SS concerning the amount and type of information in the ~~DATA~~. For example, the radio man who participated in the search of the wreckage came to believe that the ~~DATA~~ included not only information that four or five crew members had parachuted from Baron 52, but that one or more of these crew members were in shock and suffering from burns.

d. The unit history of the 6994th SS further illustrates the degree to which the conjecture of the Hq USAFSS and ~~ANALYST~~ influenced members of that unit. Describing the SAR effort, the history noted that only three bodies were found at the site, and "none were believed to be those of the Security Service crew." The account concluded with this observation: "The USAFSS crew was listed as MIAs until 23 (sic) February 1973 when their status was changed to KIA in spite of the fact that certain intelligence reports from the National Security Agency (NSA) had reported the capture of four fliers in the vicinity of Baron 52 crash site." A footnote revealed that this observation was based on the information received in the 16 February 1973 message from USAFSS. The process began with a one sentence report of a single ~~SOURCE~~ concerning four captives of unspecified nationality presently held by a PAVN element probably located in North Vietnam. In the end, speculation and rumor had built a perception by many persons that there was more than one detailed report of survivors of Baron 52 held captive in Laos.

e. Thus, when the Commanders of the 8th TFW and 56th SOW made the decision to recommend that Air Force officials change the status of the crew members to killed in action, the 6994th SS requested authority from Hq USAFSS to release a sanitized version of the ~~DATA~~ acquired on 5 February 1973, to the Commander of the 8th TFW.

11. On 27 February 1973, five days after the status change, Hq USAFSS authorized the following Secret NoFORN version of the 5 February

1973 report to be released to the Commander, 8th TFW:

"1. According to a reliable source, the enemy was moving four prisoners on trucks northward along Route 914 in Laos on 5 Feb 73. This source reported they may have been enroute to a staging area in Laos just west of the DMZ.

"2. It is speculated by Hq USAFSS that these prisoners may have been crewmembers of Baron 52, a 56SOW EC-47 aircraft which crashed in Laos on 5 Feb 73. This speculation, admittedly tenuous, is based on the fact that these prisoners were reported to be in an area some sixty-five nautical miles from the Baron 52 crash site. Depending on the flight path of Baron 52, as well as the prevailing winds that day, it is possible some crewmembers could have bailed out north of the crash site position and could possibly have been carried even further north during descent. Furthermore, since these prisoners were reportedly being transferred by trucks, it is not inconceivable that they could have been some sixty-five nautical miles from the crash site the same day that Baron 52 crashed."

12. In a message dated 1 March 1973, the 6994th SS reported that the Commander 8th TFW expressed appreciation for the above information, but felt it was very tenuous. Nevertheless, the USAFSS and the 6994th SS continued to consider the possibility that the ~~DATA~~ acquired 5.5 to 6 hours after the crash might pertain to the USAFSS crew members of Baron 52.

13. On 24 April 1973, the Air Force Chief of Staff requested that NSA review ~~DATA~~ for additional information about the USAF crewmembers downed in Laos on 5 February 1973.

14. A message from NSA to Hq USAFSS, dated 2 May 1973, reported the final review and observations regarding the ~~SOURCE~~ on 5 February 1973. This report in effect presented a fourth version of the original information. It was prepared by the analyst who published the third version on 8 February, and who presented new items of information and conjecture on 14 February 1973. Although the analyst began with an affirmation that there were no additional reflections or amplifying information concerning the original 5 February 1973 ~~SOURCE~~, he proceeded to supply more new items of information and assumptions not included in earlier versions; and synthesized these with elements of previous messages to support his conclusion that, "it is possible these 4 fliers were part of the crew of the EC-47."

15. On 3 August 1978, columnist Jack Anderson published a report based on information contained in the then still classified messages of 5 February and 2 May 1973. Anderson's report erroneously asserted that the search team discovered the remains of only one crew member, and that "afterwards, a surveillance report, which the Pentagon itself calls reliable, sighted four captured men about 65 kilometers from the crash site." Anderson's report went on to assert that "A Pentagon spokesman now agrees there's a good chance these four men were survivors of the crash. Yet the Pentagon deliberately gave the families misinformation."

16. Anderson's column obviously was based on information contained in the then still classified messages of 5 February and 2 May 1973. DIA does not know how Anderson obtained the information.

17. Inquiries prompted by Anderson's interest in the Baron 52 incident led the Department of Defense to release declassified portions of four sensitive intelligence reports to next of kin of the crew members. Three of the documents were related to the 5 February 1973 intercept. The fourth is discussed in paragraph 22, below. These were the only documents related to intercepted enemy communications that DIA's Prisoner of War Missing in Action (PW/MIA) office maintained in files concerning the crew members of Baron 52. A statement released by the Department of Defense on 3 August 1978, concerning the 5 February 1973 intercept stated that "it is not possible to determine whether or not that report pertained to crew members of the EC-47 aircraft lost on February 5, 1973."

18. A further misinterpretation of the 5 February 1973 intercept appeared in an affidavit signed on 3 November 1985 by the NSA analyst (now retired) who authored the 2 May 1973 message cited in paragraph 14, above. This sworn affidavit was prepared as an exhibit in support of a court action against the United States Government (Smith and McIntire v. Reagon, et. al., 85-119-CIV-3), filed in the East District of North Carolina, on 4 September 1985. In his affidavit, the former analyst asserted that while serving as an analyst with the National Security Agency (NSA), his section "received, analyzed, evaluated and formally reported the shoot-down of" Baron 52. The affidavit continued: "Based upon the enemy messages which we collected there were at least five to seven survivors who were identified as Americans and transported to North Vietnam." The former analyst went on to assert that he "personally wrote the message," apparently referring to the 2 May 1973 message, "that these men had been captured alive, that they were Americans and had been transported to North Vietnam." He also asserted that, "In secure phone conversations with the Defense Intelligence Agency we were in total agreement that these were the crew members of the downed EC-47Q;" and that, "The representation that there was no identity or nationality of the reported prisoners is completely false." Finally, he makes the erroneous statement that information contained in a DIA computer listing of unaccounted for personnel "confirms my report that certain of these crewmembers were captured alive..."

19. The former analyst repeated these erroneous claims concerning Baron 52 in testimony before the U.S. Senate Veteran's Affairs Committee hearings during 28 and 30 January 1986.

20. The persistent misinterpretations of the 5 February 1973 SOURCE prompted DIA to search several archives outside of DIA for information that might provide more insight into that report. The research, undertaken during September-December 1986, revealed sufficient information to permit a definitive assessment that the 5 February 1973 SOURCE was not related to crew members of Baron 52. In addition to the several observations noted above, the research yielded the following conclusions:

a. The two DATA reports published on 5 February 1973, were based on a single SOURCE. At the time of intercept the information was being passed between two PAVN radio sites in North Vietnam. The full text of the SOURCE consisted of the one sentence in each of the two reports published on 5 February 1973. U.S. intelligence did not receive any other reports that amplified or clarified the information reported on 5 February 1973.

b. The PAVN unit that passed the information did not identify the nationality of the prisoners. Different versions of the DATA identified them variously as "pilot captives," "pirates," and "fliers." Analysts assumed these terms referred to captured American airmen.

c. The analysis appended to the original version of the 5 February 1973 DATA is the most authoritative statement of the location of the four captives mentioned in the DATA; i.e., they probably were located in the vicinity of Vinh, North Vietnam. The reported text of the intercept stated the prisoners were presently being held by Group 217/210/210B; the field analyst who initially reported the DATA cited evidence that this Group was possibly located in the vicinity of Vinh, North Vietnam; and both the field analysts and the ANALYST agreed that this Group probably was located in North Vietnam. Additionally, recent research confirmed that both ends of the METHOD radio link were located in North Vietnam.

d. The conclusion stated by the ANALYST in his 2 May 1973 report, that "it is possible that these four fliers were part of the crew of the EC-47," is based on several arbitrary unsubstantiated or inaccurate statements and assumptions. For example:

(1) The reported text of the DATA does not substantiate many of the statements supposedly excerpted from the SOURCE, such as the analyst's references to the use of vehicles to transport the prisoners; references to treatment to be afforded the prisoners; references to reports to higher headquarters; etc.

(2) The speculation that Baron 52's flight path might have taken it much further north disregarded the reported locations of the aircraft at specific times during its mission and the speed of the aircraft. The speculation that the aircraft might have flown much further north was predicated on the unsubstantiated assumptions that four captives were located at a kilometer marker 44, about 65NM north of the crash site, 5-6 hours after Baron 52 was lost; and that the captives must have been members of the Baron 52 crew. In order to sustain those assumptions, the USAFSS and ANALYSTS apparently found it necessary to compensate for their acknowledgement that it would have been impossible for any survivors of Baron 52 to have traveled a 65NM distance from the crash site on the

ground in that short a time.

(3) In his 2 May message the *ANALYST* assumed that the numbers 44 and 93 were kilometer markers. An examination of reporting obtained from other *SOURCES* and technical references indicate that the numbers most likely were dinomic radio call signs or designators for military units. Furthermore, even if one accepts the assumption that the numbers were intended to be kilometer markers, it was a completely arbitrary assertion that they were located on the routes cited in the 2 May 1973 message, or, for that matter, that they were located in Laos.

(4) The assumption that the numbers were kilometer markers and their arbitrary correlation to the two routes chosen by the *ANALYST* apparently were predicated on the analyst's desire to select locations in relative close proximity to the crash site and to each other. In doing this, the analyst disregarded the fact that the *DATA* was being passed between two *DATA* stations in North Vietnam; that the text of the *DATA* stated that Group 210/210B/217 was presently holding the prisoners; and that both the field analyst and the *ANALYST* agreed that this Group probably was located in North Vietnam.

(5) The proposition that PAVN would have moved any survivors of Baron 52 along the route described by the *ANALYST* is not consistent with other facts:

- As a practical matter, mountains located between the two kilometer markers he cited obstructed travel between these two points. Also, there were other practical considerations for not moving prisoners on the routes selected by the analyst, which pass through the western DMZ. For one, it would have exposed the captives and their escorts to increased risk from U.S. air forces. For another, weather would have made it difficult to travel through the western DMZ during February, which is the height of the north-east monsoon period. During this period most PAVN traffic followed the dry weather corridors in Laos.

- More important, however, in Laos the PAVN followed a well established pattern of moving most northbound personnel, including captives, into North Vietnam through the Mu Gia Pass (Point #11, attached map). In fact, two captives, an American and a Canadian, were moved through the Mu Gia Pass as recent as about two months prior to the loss of Baron 52.

(6) The text of the *SOURCE* does not substantiate the analyst's speculation that the captives were in Laos, enroute to BT 9. In his analysis he stated that two unidentified personalities in the BT 9 area were to be contacted concerning movement of the prisoners. As noted earlier, coupled with the fact that the analyst was inconsistent in his references to

personalities; the only personality mentioned in the text of the *DATA* was a "Mr. Van," a common given name that can not be definitively correlated to any specific PAVN element. It seems more likely that the analyst's speculation that the prisoners were enroute to BT 9 was predicated on its relatively close proximity to the KM 93 to which he correlated the number 93 mentioned in the intercept. However, that correlation can not be sustained either, for the reasons stated earlier. Furthermore, the suggestion that the prisoners were enroute to BT 9 disregarded some significant facts. It disregarded the text of the intercept, which said the prisoners were being held by a Group that probably was located in North Vietnam; and it disregarded the fact that the principal function of BT 9 was operation and maintenance of a fuel pipeline, not transportation of personnel.

e. It would have been impossible for enemy forces to have searched for, captured and transported survivors of Baron 52, if any, to any of the locations mentioned by the USAFSS and *ANALYSTS* in their various analyses of the 5 February 1973 intercept.

21. The *DATA* acquired on 5 February 1973, does not pertain to crew members of Baron 52. The 1973 analyses that correlated that information to the Baron 52 crew members were based on arbitrary unsubstantiated and often inaccurate assumptions that can not be sustained when compared with facts. Inasmuch as the information also can not be correlated to any other incidents, it should be noted that the information reflects data reported from one enemy unit to another, not confirmed data concerning American losses. A review of war time *SOURCES* reveals that enemy units frequently reported inflated, inaccurate or false information concerning purported U.S. casualties and captives.

22. The 5 February 1973 *SOURCE* discussed above was the subject of three *DATA* documents that were entered into the DIA's PW/MIA files for the crew members of Baron 52. A 15 February 1973 *SOURCE* was the subject of the fourth *DATA* document in these files. This document, a message dated 17 February 1973, reported that on 15 February 1973, U.S. intelligence *SOURCE* report by a PAVN AAA unit that, "[on 14 February 1973] the people involved in the South Laotian campaign have shot down one aircraft and [unknown amount of text unreadable] captured the pilot/pilots." The *SOURCE* instructed subordinate units to search for evidence of the aircraft and report their findings.

a. When this report was received in 1973, DIA analysts would have placed it in the files of the Baron 52 crew members because the *DATA* was obtained only a few days after the loss of Baron 52; because it appeared to refer to U.S. airmen captured in Laos; because there were no other losses to which it might correlate; and because DIA did not receive any additional or amplifying information that would conclusively rule out a correlation to crew members of Baron 52.

b. DIA's recent research revealed that two subsequent SOURCES on the same date, but which the PW/MIA Office did not receive, clarified that the information in the first SOURCE was not related to crew members of Baron 52. The two subsequent SOURCES revealed that the PAVN AAA unit claimed to have struck an RF-4 with AAA fire, and that the aircraft caught fire and flew off. The headquarters of the AAA unit instructed its subordinate elements to search for evidence that the aircraft crashed. The subsequent DATA also revealed that the PAVN unit claimed to have hit the aircraft shortly before 0900 local time, 14 February 1973, near the Vietnam-Lao border, in western Quang Tri Province, South Vietnam.

c. No American personnel or aircraft were lost on 14 February 1973. DIA was unable to find any record that any U.S. aircraft sustained battle damage on that date. The only record of any aircraft incident for that date was a brief entry in the operations log of the 56th Aerospace Rescue & Recovery Squadron indicating that an F-4 with flight control problems made an emergency landing at an airbase in Thailand, at 1220 hours local time, 14 February 1973. There was no indication that the F-4 had sustained AAA damage, or was related in any way to the intercept.

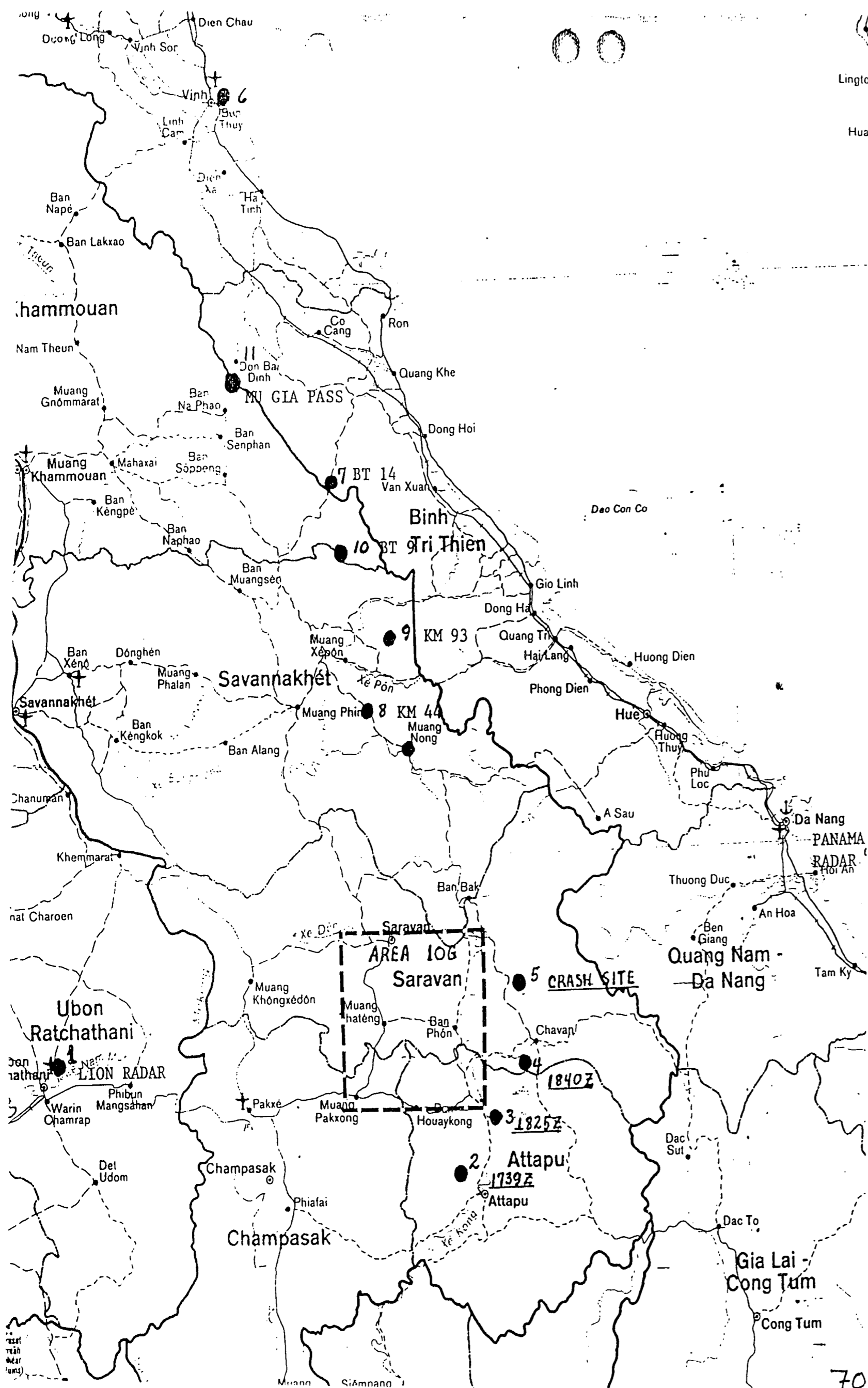
d. Perhaps because the subsequent SOURCES clearly did not pertain to any missing Americans, they were not received by or entered into the files of DIA's PW/MIA office. They would have revealed that the information in the initial DATA did not pertain to crew members of Baron 52. If they had been received by the PW/MIA office, the DATA would never have been placed in the files of the crew members of Baron 52.

IV. CONCLUSION:

1. The U.S. Government has not received any intelligence information that any crew members survived the crash of Baron 52, in Laos, on 5 February 1973.
2. The four SOURCE documents that were placed in the files of the crew members of Baron 52, during 1973, were based on two reports by enemy units that claimed to have shot down or captured American or Allied aircraft or airmen. The enemy claims can not be correlated to any incidents that involved unaccounted for American personnel or aircraft.

1 Incl
as

ANALYST



Lingto

Huar

0360132

O 250124Z FEB 73

FM

TO

METHOD / DATA

UNID SOURCE

REVEALS CAPTIVITY OF FOUR PILOTS

BTWN 05 DATA

FEB 73,

DATA

THE FOLLOWING WAS REVEALED: GROUP 217 (UNID TRUE UNIT DESIGNATORY) IS HOLDING FOUR PILOTS CAPTIVE AND THE GROUP IS REQUESTING ORDERS CONCERNING WHAT TO DO WITH THEM FROM AN UNID UNIT PROB SUBORDINATE THE 559TH. COMMENTS OTHER SOURCES INDICATE THAT GROUP 217 IS POSSIBLY LOCATED IN VIC OF VINH/BT9; THIS REPORT BASED ON PRELIMINARY ANALYSIS OF DATA

#0031

NNNN

71

70

101473

to

CO

5 FEB 23

CO

CO

CAPTIVITY OF FOUR PILOTS

MOVEMENT OF PRISONERS

GROUP HAS FOUR PILOTS

THEY ARE GOING

GROUP IS HOLDING FOUR PILOTS CAPTIVE AND THE GROUP IS REQUESTING
ORDERS CONCERNING WHAT TO DO WITH THEM

FROM 44 TO 93
ALONG THE ROAD.

THEY ARE HAVING DIFFICULTIES MOVING