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# Intelligence Information Report

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REPORT NO. CS-311/01559-71

DATE DISTR. / March 1971

COUNTRY South Vietnam

NO. July 1967 - 28 December 1970

SUBJECT Christmas 1970 Release of 11 Vietnamese Prisoners of War by the Viet Cong; Description of Treatment They Received

ACQ Vietnam, Can Tho (13 January 1971)

SOURCE [REDACTED]

Summary: On 25 December 1970, 11 Vietnamese Military Prisoners of War (POW's) were released by the Viet Cong (VC) in the U Minh Forest and directed to a Government of Vietnam (GVN) outpost in Kien Giang Province. Their release was announced at a propaganda ceremony. Along with their release, they each received a propaganda pamphlet calling on soldiers and civil servants to join the Revolution. The men said they were well treated and expected that other prisoners would be released during Tet. They were not able to provide any information on U.S. or Allied prisoners except to say that they had been told by their guards that "foreign" prisoners were taken to "regional" prison camps. End Summary.

1. On 25 December 1970, the VC released 11 GVN POW's who had been incarcerated in the U Minh Forest. The prisoners, five Popular Forces soldiers, four Regional Forces (RF) soldiers, one GVN Marine and one People's Self-Defense Forces soldier, said that sometime in the afternoon on 23 December (a guard told them the date) they were taken from the VC detention camp and walked two to five hours to a canal or river. There, they and their guards boarded sampans and paddled for two nights and one day, stopping only to eat at night. They arrived at a hamlet, name unknown, the morning of 25 December and rested. The ceremony for their release started around noon and lasted about two or three hours. They were told that VC Military Region 3 (MR-3) had issued a directive ordering their release and proclaiming the day as a "Celebration of Released Prisoners."

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One Field Distribution see final paragraph

They were then given a long dissertation on how well they had been treated by the VC and each was given a pamphlet to take with him, a propaganda document calling on soldiers and GVN civil servants to join the VC. Comment:

(A) The released men did not know how they were chosen for release or whether the directive specified them by name or whether the local VC had chosen them. (B) VC MR-3 covers the lower Delta and includes GVN An Xuyen, Bac Lieu, Ba Xuyen, Chuong Thien, Kien Giang, Phong Dinh, Vinh Binh, most of Vinh Long and part of An Giang and Chau Doc Provinces.)

2. The men stayed in or near the hamlet until very late the night of 26 December or early morning of 27 December. Their VC guard escort left the hamlet on 25 December, turning the guard duties over to the local guerrillas. While in the hamlet, the prisoners were kept blindfolded except to eat and during the release ceremony. They were fed by residents of the hamlet. Finally, all of the prisoners were put aboard one boat; they paddled until just after daybreak and then were put ashore. They were told that they were about 1,000 meters from the Cai Nuoc (WR110830) RF outpost and that they could hail passing boats to get there. On the way to the outpost they were picked up by a GVN patrol boat.

4. The men did not know the exact location of the detention camp, as they had been blindfolded both going to and coming from the camp. They stated that the location of the camp changed frequently, but it was always deep in U Minh Forest and was known as "Camp T". There were about 25 POW's there. Camp security and maintenance were provided by one VC platoon armed with SKS and AK-47 rifles. The platoon provided guards, meals and a political cadre to indoctrinate the POW's.

5. All POW's wore leg irons, a curved rod with two holes at each end and a lock, at all times except for a brief exercise period when they were allowed to walk around in a small area, under guard. They were fed twice daily, at 0500 hours and at 1500 hours. The meals consisted of a bowl of rice, salt and, on rare occasions, dried fish or fish sauce. The POW's were given needles and thread to mend their clothes but were not given blankets or mosquito nets. A daily political indoctrination was conducted during which they were told of "the glorious VC victories in South Vietnam, Cambodia and Laos" and were kept informed about the VC's peace proposals and rejection of the GVN's peace proposals. The POW's agreed no single point, political or military, was stressed during these sessions and said they had not paid too much attention to the lectures. At night the POW's were grouped together in units of four or five and a straight metal rod was run through their leg irons to a central column and padlocked there. The rod was approximately one inch in diameter and two meters long.

6. The men said they had not been beaten by the VC during their detention, and they appeared to be in good physical condition. One said he had been wounded by a 40mm fragment during an airstrike on his POW camp and had subsequently received good medical treatment. Their guards had indicated more prisoners "might" be released at Tet. Comment: No POW's are known to have been released in this area over Tet.)

7. None of the 11 POW's had seen any U.S. or allied prisoners during their imprisonment but several said that their VC guards told them that "foreign" POW's were kept at "regional" prison camps "in the mountains." Three of the POW's said they had heard from their VC guards that "foreign",

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and especially U.S., prisoners got better treatment than Vietnamese POW's. One of the three had been told that U.S. prisoners got chicken and coffee regularly.

[REDACTED] Comment: The prisoners said that their camp was considered to be province-level.)

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