

[REDACTED]
CS 317/062/71
317/09062/71

9 December 1971

MEMORANDUM

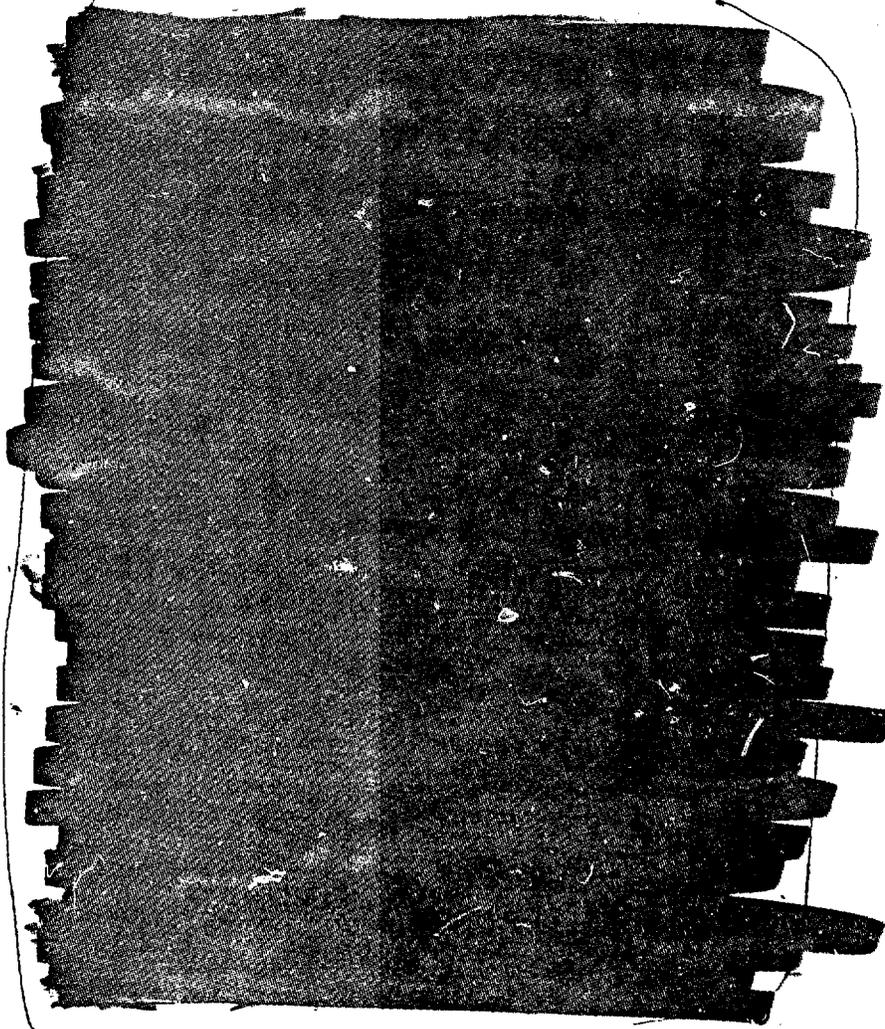
SUBJECT: Information on Prisoner of War Camp in Ha Dong Town,
Ha Tay Province, North Vietnam, [REDACTED]
[REDACTED]

The following report resulted from the debriefing of [REDACTED]
whose bona fides have not yet been established. [REDACTED]
[REDACTED]

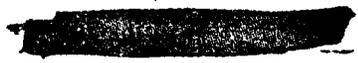
The information in this report was coordinated [REDACTED] with the Joint Prisoner Recovery Center and based on the reservations expressed by its reviewing officer, the decision was initially made not to disseminate it.* The JPRC's specific reasons for tending to doubt the source's story are noted at the appropriate places in the report. JPRC also furnished these statistics: total prisoners of war (POW) in Southeast Asia (including China) is 469; total missing in action (same area) is 1,124; there are no Australian POW's on record as being held in North Vietnam (NVN).

[REDACTED]

*JPRC Comment: There are no holdings of a POW camp in Ha Dong (WJ815189). The closest camp near Route 6 on which there is information is at WJ530200. It was established on 15 March 1969, according to JPRC records.
[REDACTED]



1. More than 1,000 U.S. and Australian POW's are located at the Ha Dong POW camp located approximately eight miles southwest of Hanoi at W1815189. The camp is located in Ha Dong town itself, directly adjacent to Route 6 and about 100 yards southwest of the last stop on the



[REDACTED]

Hanoi-Ha Dong streetcar line.* No attempt has been made to camouflage the camp in any way. Terrain to the south and west of the camp is rather soft-and marshy. The terrain to the east and north of the camp is firmer.

2. The camp was formerly a landlord-owned housing tract which was taken over by the North Vietnamese Government in about 1954. In 1966 it was converted to a prison camp for Vietnamese prisoners. Early in 1969 it was converted into a POW camp for Americans and Australians. In early 1970 the POW camps at Son Tay and Ben Pha Den were closed, and the prisoners from these camps moved to the Ha Dong camp. Consequently, the Ha Dong camp became badly overcrowded.

3. Prisoners were kept in continuous, shedlike barracks extending around three sides of the inside wall. The barracks were two stories high; access to the second story was by means of ladders fastened at regular intervals to the front wall of the barracks. There were no partitions or furniture in the barracks, and the prisoners slept crowded together on the floor. Doorways and windows were cut into the front of the barracks at regular intervals to admit light and air and provide access. Windows had neither glass nor screens, and the doorways had not been fitted with doors. During the day the prisoners were free to wander in and out of the barracks and move around the compound. At night they were expected to remain in the barracks.**

4. Security was "quite light."*** Four guards were on duty at all times, one in each of four corner guard towers. The guards seldom

Comment: [REDACTED] Sketches of the camp in relation to the surrounding area and a detailed sketch of the camp itself are being [REDACTED]

**JPRC Comment: The POW's ability to "wander" is inconsistent with the operation of other POW camps in NVN.

***JPRC Comment: "Security was quite light." Again inconsistent with debriefings of released POW's.

entered the compound. They climbed to the guard towers on ladders fastened to the outside of the prison wall. The small guard towers were built on top of the barracks, and in each tower was a floodlight aimed into the compound to illuminate it at night. There were no machine guns in the towers, nor were mines or barbed wire around the camp. Guards had no weapons such as tear gas grenades or other special chemical weapons. They were equipped only with AK-47 and SKS rifles.

5. Prisoners regularly left the camp for agricultural work details in the nearby fields. Details numbered from 100 to 200 prisoners and were supervised by two or three guards.* In general, the guards did not harass, persecute, or beat the prisoners, although prisoners were occasionally chained for disciplinary reasons.

6. Fewer than 30 guards were assigned to the prison. There were about 60 additional soldiers assigned to Ha Dong city; the 108th infantry battalion was stationed in Hanoi; and there were about 100 soldiers quartered in the vicinity of the Long Binh Bridge over the Red River. At Ky Son there were eight heavy Soviet anti-aircraft rocket launchers, manned by about 20 Chinese, and at Ba Vi Mountain there were several hundred light anti-aircraft rockets, each about one meter long. The heavy rockets at Ky Son were set in camouflaged concrete bunkers. With the exception of the camp wall, there were no fortifications or weapons positions in the immediate vicinity of the camp. Helicopters could land on the volleyball court inside the camp, in the cemetery to the northeast, in the fields to the southeast, and possibly in the rice and potato fields north of the camp. The fields to the southwest were too soft and muddy for helicopter landings.

7. The combined guard barracks and administration building was located directly across Route 6 from the camp. Guards were free to roam Ha Dong town during their off-duty hours. There was one telephone in the administration building which, with the exception of the possible use of Ha Dong's air raid siren, was the only means of communication available to the camp staff.

8. The camp was commanded by Major Nguyen Van Thanh, a short, heavy-set man about 45 years old, as of late 1970. His quarters,

*JPRC Comment: "200 prisoners supervised by two or three guards." → Again inconsistent.

[REDACTED]

where he lived with his wife and two children, were located just south of the administration building. He had an attractive daughter about 26 years old, Nguyen Thihon Gung, and a student son about 20 years old, Nguyen Van Loan. Thanh was a Party member, a basically humane and generous man who had complained to his superiors many times about the camp conditions. However, he had not been given the support he needed to improve those circumstances. * The deputy commander of the camp was a Captain (FNU) Kim, about 60 years old. There was no camp political officer. **

9. Prisoners were awakened at 0500 hours, began work at 0630 and worked until 1030. They ate at 1100, rested until 1400 and then worked until 1730. Dinner was at 1800, after which the prisoners were free to play volleyball, talk, etc., until 2100, when they went to bed. Their diet consisted of rice with a few vegetables, vegetable soup, occasionally fish, and on rare occasions, meat. Prisoners were dressed in white pajamas with vertical blue stripes. They had no footwear. Prisoners were not permitted rings, watches, other jewelry, or rank insignia. They were not segregated in any way and during non-working hours were free to intermingle as they wished.

10. None of the prisoners observed at the camp was wounded, but many appeared sick. Lacking mosquito nets, the prisoners suffered from malaria and sleeping on the floor because of lack of beds, they suffered from dermatitis. They were issued only thin cotton blankets for use at night. Once a week a doctor visited the camp to treat ill prisoners. The very sick were taken to hospitals in Hanoi.

11. Prisoners were not permitted mail or packages. There were no propaganda meetings and little attempt was made to indoctrinate the men. *** Occasionally a propaganda broadcast was played over the

[REDACTED]

**JPRC Comment: "There was no camp political officer." Inconsistent with NVN POW camp operation.

***JPRC Comment: "Little attempt was made to indoctrinate the men." Again not a normal practice.

prison public address system. No interrogations were conducted at the camp. The camp was frequently visited by groups of Vietnamese or third country nationals. Occasionally Polish members of the International Control Commission visited the camp, but Canadian and Indian members of the Commission were not permitted to visit the camp, because the North Vietnamese feared they would give details about the camp to U.S. authorities. North Vietnamese policy is to move any camp known to U.S. authorities.*

Comment: [redacted] did not count the number of prisoners at this camp but merely estimated the number of men he saw during his two visits. Since the camp was badly overcrowded, this may have led him to overestimate the number of the men there.

FIELD EXTENDED 20 YDS FROM WALL
NO MINES OR BARBED WIRE

GUARD
5 YDS HIGH
1 MAND
ARMED
RIFLE

GUARD
POST

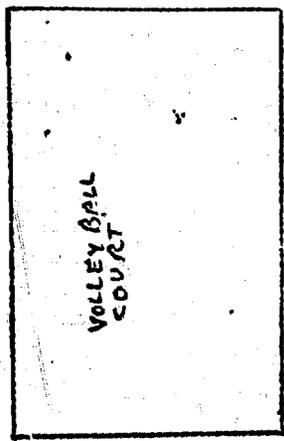
GUARD
POST

#1

CAMP MEASURES 60 X 120 YDS

FIELD CLEARED 30 YDS FROM WALL

CONNECTED BARRACKS
2 STORIES
NO PARTITIONS, WOOD
TIN AND TILE ROOFS
ACCESS TO UPPER STORIES VIA LADDERS



NARROW LANE

STEEL
GATE
2 YDS

DUTY
OFFICER
POST

NARROW LANE

HOU 56

4 YD HIGH X 20 CM THICK
BRICK WALL ALL AROUND
CAMP

GUARD
POST

GUARD
POST

GUARDS
MOUNT
POSTS VIA
LADDERS
OUT SIDE
WALLS

340 STEEL GATE
DRIVEWAY PASSES
THROUGH BARRACKS
USED FOR TRUCK

ROUTE 6



CS 317/09062/71