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S U M M A R Y

There was a definite NVA/VC policy toward the treatment of defectors, as well as SVN and Allied prisoners of war which distinguished between those who defected to a VC "liberated" area, those who defected in a battle situation, those who surrendered voluntarily during battle and those who were taken prisoner involuntarily during battle. Defectors to "liberated" areas were to be welcomed, but carefully watched to establish their bona fides, and defectors in battle were to be given similar treatment. Those who surrendered during battle were classified according to the circumstances under which they surrendered and were treated accordingly but in no case were prisoners supposed to be ill-treated or have their personal possessions confiscated. This policy was not, however, adhered to, and prisoners were often tortured by platoon and company cadres who also took their personal effects. Since combat units were forced to move frequently POW's were

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None

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turned over to local authorities who adhered more strictly to the official policy regarding treatment of prisoners. All captured U.S. pilots were imprisoned in one compound in HANOI where they received good food in comparison to NVA troops, adequate clothing and medicines and recreational facilities.

1. The NVA/VC forces have always realized that the SVN troops were mercenaries; therefore the majority of its cadres and soldiers fought without objectives and ideals. They soon got tired and backed down in the face of the difficulties and obstacles of battle. A NVA/VC policy towards prisoners of war and defectors was thus formulated; it was considered to be a very important policy. Each cadre and soldier had to be familiar with this policy and comply strictly with the prescribed regulations in order to create a strong psychological influence on the SVN armed forces and create dissidence among their troops.

POLICY TOWARDS DEFECTORS IN LIBERATED AREAS

2. SVN military defectors should be welcomed by the local organization and people. Those whose native villages were in the liberated areas would be sent home to see their families. If their families lived in the unliberated areas, the VC would try to find every way to inform their families to come to see them. If the defector requested to be sent home to earn his living, he would be given both moral and material assistance. If the defectors wanted to participate in the "Revolutionary work", the VC would assign work suitable to their capabilities. The defectors were carefully watched and investigated to see whether the enemy had dispatched the troops as false defectors in order to penetrate in the Revolutionary rank.

POLICY TOWARDS THE DEFECTORS ON THE BATTLEFIELD

3. Those who surrendered on the battlefield were considered to be oppressed and forced to carry weapons or that they were bribed with money. They should be as well treated as the other defectors. If they surrendered due to loss of their position, they would be treated as a prisoner.

POLICY TOWARDS SVN PRISONERS OF WAR

4. During an engagement, the soldiers on both sides had to be determined to kill the enemy because if they did not, the enemy would kill them. However, if the enemy put down his weapons and surrendered, he was considered to have thought over the matter and repented; he then immediately received kind treatment. The prisoners captured on the battlefield would be temporarily tied up for the sake of security, but no VC was allowed to insult and beat the prisoners. The prisoners then would be taken to the rear of the battlefield, but not to the same withdrawal route as the unit. The policy of the Front towards prisoners of war would be explained to the prisoners in order to reassure them. In the case of POW's who were natives of the liberated areas, their families were informed of their arrival and allowed to come to see them. The money and the belongings of prisoners such as wrist-watches fountain pens, radios etc.. were not to be confiscated, but were to be kept after giving the prisoners a receipt to prevent loss. The belongings of dead prisoners were not to be seized, only the military equipment. Wounded prisoners were to be treated, if possible and then sent to the nearest hospital for medical treatment to save their lives. Absolutely, none of their belongings were to be taken. Every effort should be made to give prisoners sufficient rations and medicines to maintain their health. The prisoners had collective lodging and

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messing, and they were permitted to move about freely in the limited areas (lodging houses, mess hall, bath room, toilet, etc.). Each prisoner received two cans of rice and three piasters of other food a day. The sum for food could be used to buy salt or fish sauce only. The cooks were supposed to gather wild vegetables or ask the local people for vegetables to feed the prisoners. Only the sick prisoners received medicines. After capture, the health of prisoners deteriorated greatly, because the prisons were located in forests, and the prisoners came from the lowlands where there was sufficient food. Only the military region had the right to liberate prisoners, but Source did not know the regulations for doing so.

5. U.S. PILOTS IMPRISONED IN NVN

In September 1965, through a conversation with HUONG, a Senior Captain who was a cadre sent from Military Zone 5 to Regiment 2 to check on the situation of the unit (infiltrating into SVN in May 1965), Source learned that US pilot prisoners were detained in HANOI (specific location unknown). The prison consisted of four rows of two floor houses (size unknown); two of the rows were used for lodging, one was used as the mess hall and kitchen, and the other as a canteen. Each U.S. pilot prisoner received five NVN piasters for food expenses each day in comparison with 0.68 piasters granted to a NVN cadre or soldier. They spent only three piasters for food a day, and the remainder of the sum could be used for refreshments. They had three meals a day consisting of bread and soup for breakfast and outlets, chicken, fried pork or fried vegetables for other meals. The US pilot prisoners ate together. They went to the mess hall only at mealtime; four of them took individual seats at the same table, and they talked during meals. They also received sufficient clothing (quantity unknown), soap of normal and high quality, toothpaste and other necessities. The prisoners had sufficient medicines, and one doctor and three or four medics to take care of them. The high ranking cadres sometimes came to see them. In the canteen, there was a refreshment room, a reading room and a ping pong room equipped with radios. The U.S. pilot prisoners were free to listen to the US broadcasts. In the prison area, there were football, volleyball and physical training fields, as well as sports equipment. Every month, the entertainment and movie group presented shows. The prisoners sometimes were permitted to take sight-seeing tours of HANOI or the areas bombed by the US Air Forces. In general, the US pilot prisoners were well treated by the NVN Government. They could perform the same normal activities as a NVN cadre or soldier, but they were kept under careful surveillance.

POLICY TOWARDS AMERICAN TROOPS

6. Source did not study the VC policy toward American POW's, but he heard that the VC cadres were ordered to feed them well (daily ration= 20 SVN piasters) and to help them if any of them wanted to make contact with their families.

LIVING CONDITION OF POW's

7. Since Source was a member of a combat unit, he did not have the function of taking care of POW's; therefore he had no knowledge of the POW's living conditions and could only provide information on the POW's from the time of capture on the battlefield to the time they were handed over to the local authorities. When a POW was captured on the battlefield, he was immediately interrogated by operations and training cadres on tactical information relating to the battle. He was also asked about his grade, position, unit and operation plans.

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The POW's were classified into officers, non-commissioned officers, soldiers, volunteers and draftees, but all of them were treated equally. The POW's were tied up and sent to a prearranged place where they were taken to the Regiment. Since the Regiment was a combat unit which moved very often, the handling of POW's was very difficult, so the Regiment had to hand them over to the local authorities. Before being transferred to the local authorities, the POW's were reinterviewed by the Regiment Operations and Training cares on their biographical data and the NVN Government's policy was explained to them. In reality, however, the VC cadres rarely applied correctly their policy toward POW's; for example the prisoners captured at the DEO NGANG battle in PHU MY District (February 1965) and the GOI RIENG battle in BA TO District, QUANG NGAI Province, (December 1965) were tortured by Platoon and Company cadres who also confiscated their belongings, such as wrist-watches, pens, radios and money. Source heard that, once transferred to the local authorities, the POW's were detained in the jungle, but they were well treated and rarely tortured. If they were not cooperative when interrogated, the interrogators only tried to convince them by explaining to them the VC policy and at last almost all of them were let go.

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