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WASH. OFFICE

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COUNTRY : NORTH VIETNAM (NVN)  
 SOUTH VIETNAM (SVN) 1.3(a)(4)

SUBJECT : NVA Policy on the Treatment of  
 POW's and U.S. War Dead

DATE OF INFO : January 1967

DATE AND PLACE OF ACQUISITION : SAIGON, Vietnam

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S U M M A R Y

Source attended a lecture given by the unit political officer concerning the expected treatment of U.S./GVN prisoners and the handling of American war dead. Special treatment was to be accorded to the GVN soldier who voluntarily surrendered. He was to be given extra rations, medicines, and a certain degree of personal liberty during the time he was being encouraged to join the VC. The treatment captured prisoners were to receive varied, depending on whether they were passive or hostile. VC policy towards U.S. war dead varied according to battlefield conditions. Weapons were to be retrieved whenever possible. American bodies would also be recovered if it was safe to do so. They were to be searched and all documents and personal effects, and papers were to be removed before burying. These articles were to be forwarded to unit headquarters.

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1. Prior to infiltrating SVN (January 1967) Source's 170-man company was assembled and lectured by the political officer on the treatment of prisoners of war and the handling of U.S. war dead.
2. Prisoners were to be well treated and not manhandled. The overall treatment of POWS were to receive varied according to which of the three categories they fell into. One who surrendered voluntarily to the VC was to be well fed issued pills for illnesses such as malaria, and not confined. He would be propagandized to follow the VC and freed after a period of instruction with the option of joining the VC or returning to his home. The prisoners who was captured but remained passive throughout his detention would also be encouraged to follow the VC. The stubborn prisoner would receive no benefits or special considerations. Source alleges that he did not know how or if this policy was practiced as his unit did not capture any prisoners. Enemy wounded were to be cared for and helped. Source did not hear of or receive any instructions to shoot seriously wounded U.S. or GVN soldiers.
3. VC policy towards U.S. dead varied according to battlefield conditions. Bodies of fallen U.S. soldiers were to left alone during heated engagements; their weapons were to be collected if possible. In the event there was no danger to the VC and time was not of the essence, U.S. bodies were to be recovered; divested of all documents, personal effects, papers and weapons, and then buried. Everything taken from a body was to be sent to company headquarters. Soldiers who were caught keeping one of the items would be punished. Source did not know where these effects were taken after reaching unit headquarters. The men were not informed of the reason why they had to bury the bodies, but were told to treat the corpses with courtesy for "Americans and Vietnamese are no longer enemies in death".

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