

Ministry of National Defense
Military Security Department

1. The Military Security Department (Cuc Bao Ve Quan Doi/MSD) is a military intelligence and security service, which has historically had a military prisons and detention system in the People's Armed Forces of Vietnam (PAVN). Although overtly under the General Political Department of the Socialist Republic of Vietnam's (SRV) Ministry of National Defense (MND), the MSD was covertly subordinate to the Ministry of Interior (MOI). The MSD has been under the MOI and its predecessor Ministry of Public Security (1951-1975) and Directorate General for Public Security (1946-1951), since its official establishment under the MND/PAVN on 22 March 1946. Between the early 1970's and October 1981, the MSD was a staff-line department of the MOI/MPS with the designation K-32. The K-32 Military Security Department was subordinate to the MOI's Protection Bloc (Khoi Bao Ve) between June 1975 and October 1981. In October 1981, the MOI underwent a major reorganization, which resulted in the upgrading of its professional blocs into a general department (tong cuc) structure with subordinate departments. The MOI's Protection Bloc was dissolved with subordinate departments placed under the MOI's General Department for the Development of Forces, the General Department for People's Police, and the General Department for People's Security which was renamed the General Department for Counterintelligence in 1989.

2. The MSD has primary responsibility for the internal security of the MND and PAVN. It is the only known military service with the power to investigate, arrest, detain and interrogate criminal and espionage suspects in the MND/PAVN. Espionage and national security investigations are coordinated with the MOI which is responsible for the conduct of all counterintelligence and national security cases. CDV officers served as military prosecutors in espionage and national security related cases brought before military tribunals. The MOI provided the MSD with professional guidance, technical equipment, personnel, and training.

3. The MSD also has a vertical chain of command over all military security components in the PAVN down to the battalion level. Corps, front and military region political staff departments have military security offices, which have at least

one temporary detention facility with a 75-man staff for military offenders. Division, brigade, major city and provincial military command political staff offices have military security sections, which have at least one temporary pre-trial detention facility with a 30-man staff for military offenders. There were no formalized detention facilities at the regimental and battalion levels. Military offenders, who were tried, convicted and sentenced before military tribunals, were transferred to MOI/MPS-administered prisons (reeducation camps) to serve more than one year sentences.

4. The MSD was headed by Chinese-trained Senior Colonel/Major General Tran Kinh Chi from September 1966 to September 1974, Senior Colonel/Major General Pham Kiet, June 1958-September 1966, and Senior Colonel Tran Hoai An, 1955-1958. Senior Colonel Tran Kinh Chi was acting director between 1959 and September 1966. Deputy Directors included Soviet KGB-trained Senior Colonel Pham Thai aka Nam Thai aka Tran Quoc Hung, August 1969 to at least 1977, KGB-trained Senior Colonel Nguyen Chi, 1961 to September 1974, Colonel Nguyen Nhu Kinh, 1971 to September 1974, Lieutenant Colonel Le Minh Tien aka Le Van Tien, 1973-1974, Lieutenant Colonel Tran Kinh Chi, 1955-1959. Of these individuals, only Senior Colonel Pham Thai has been directly associated with POW's by name. Senior Colonel Pham Thai had previously headed the MSD's Forward Command in South Vietnam between April 1964 and August 1969, during which he had an undefined role in the release of POW's. A Senior Colonel Pham Thai was later reported to be in charge of the PAVN Group 776 complex of reeducation camps in the northern SRV which held about 20,000 ARVN/GVN officers and officials between mid-1976 and autumn 1978, when the PAVN Group 776 complex was closed with all ARVN/GVN inmates transferred to central-level MOI reeducation camps. This Senior Colonel Pham Thai may be identical with MSD Deputy Director Senior Colonel Pham Thai.

5. The MSD maintained, as of 1981, a 30-man headquarters staff inside the main U-shaped building inside the MOI headquarters compound at No. 15 Tran Binh Trong Street, Hanoi. The 30-man staff at this MOI headquarters address included the MSD Director and his Deputy Directors. The MSD telephone number (unknown), as well as the residential telephone numbers (unknown) for the MSD Director and Deputy Directors were listed in the classified MOI telephone book. Other MSD staff offices were located inside the MND headquarters Citadel compound.

6. Of the known MSD headquarters staff offices, Interrogation Office 50 (Phong 50 Chap Phap) was the central authority over MSD interrogation and detention facilities. All information on Office 50 is dated September 1974. Office 50 had the authority to arrest, detain and interrogate national-level suspects and provided guidance for military security temporary detention facilities throughout the MND/PAVN. Office 50 had at least three central-level temporary pre-trial detention and interrogation facilities in North Vietnam as of 1974, designated Z-5, Z-15, and Z-25. [REDACTED]

[REDACTED] these three facilities which presumably had 50-man staffs. Office 50 had a professional staff of 20 interrogators under the command of Soviet KGB-trained Lieutenant Colonel Nguyen Bich and his deputies Majors Ngo Dang Nien and Vu Xuan Ca. MSD Lieutenant Colonels Ho Ngoc Nhuan and Nguyen Van Hau were also involved with Office 50.

7. During the Vietnam War years, the MSD was directly involved with POW's in both North and South Vietnam. Between 1965 and 1969, the MSD was [REDACTED] to be responsible for coordinating interests within the MND for the exploitation of U.S. POW's; however, [REDACTED]

[REDACTED] The MPS, rather than the MND, had primary responsibility for the administration, care, detention, interrogation, and exploitation of U.S. POW's, and kept complete records on all U.S. POW's, who had been captured in North Vietnam and who had been transferred to prison facilities which were administered by the MPS and where interrogations were conducted. This would include records on U.S. POW's who were placed in facilities that were reportedly jointly administered by the MPS Prisons Management Department and the MSD, or were reportedly jointly guarded by the MPS and the MND General Political Department's Military Justice Department (Cuc Quan Phap/MJD). However, the involvement of the MJD in administering or providing guard force personnel for U.S. POW detention facilities [REDACTED]

[REDACTED] The MSD had a military prison system to administer, arrest powers, interrogation, and security guard force responsibilities. The MSD and the MOI/MPS had shared responsibilities for the Ho Chi Minh Mausoleum guard force and for providing bodyguard protection for general-grade officers, who were Vietnamese Communist Party (VNCP) Politburo and Central Committee members. [REDACTED] the

the "green" uniformed troops of the MPS People's Armed Public Security Forces (PAPSF) provided the external perimeter guard force personnel for prisons and detention facilities in North Vietnam, not the PAVN.

8. [REDACTED] the MND Military Justice Department provided the external security force personnel for the Son Tay Prison and other U.S. POW detention facilities in North Vietnam before 1973. [REDACTED] the internal administration of these facilities were under the MPS which maintained U.S. POW prison records and which directed the interrogation of U.S. POW's at these facilities. [REDACTED] the MND Military Justice Department was responsible for the Son Tay or Camp Hope Prison (WJ 5337) of the 1970 Son Tay Raid fame, the Bat Bat or Briarpatch Prison (WJ 355388), and the Dan Hoi or Camp Faith Prison (WJ 751295), which held U.S. POW's before March 1973. Although the Camp Hope Prison was not used again after the November 1970 Son Tay Raid, the facility was administered by the MSD until 1979. The Bat Bat Prison was jointly administered by the MPS Prisons Management Department and the MSD. [REDACTED] claimed it was guarded by the Military Justice Department, although his release certificate was signed by the MSD.

9. During the Vietnam War, the MSD had two major forward commands in South Vietnam: the PAVN Military Region 5 (MR-5) Political Staff Department's Military Security Office; and, the PAVN's South Vietnam Liberation Army (SVNLA) Political Staff Department's Military Security Office. PAVN MR-5 had jurisdiction over the area between GVN Khanh Hoa and Darlac Provinces and the demilitarized zone. The PAVN's SVNLA was the military arm of Hanoi's Central Office for South Vietnam (COSVN) which had jurisdiction over the rest of South Vietnam and Cambodia. Of the two major forward commands, [REDACTED] about the MR-5 Political Staff's Military Security Office other than that it was commanded during the period 1971-October 1973 by Majors Phuong and Nhu and had at least one detention camp (T-15).

10. The SVNLA Political Staff's Military Security Office (Phong Bao Ve aka Office 5) had a number of administration, counterespionage, surveillance, technical staff, and interrogation section (ban chap phap). The Interrogation Section (Section 5) administered one major camp with three subcamps at national-level for PAVN SVNLA military offenders and captured GVN "spies." Its B-50 Camp was established

in 1965 with three subcamps (B-50A, B-50B, B-50C). B-50 was later redesignated as the K-55 Camp which had three subcamps (1, 2, 3). As of 1973, K-55 was commanded by Major Nam Sanh, who was supported by a 150-man staff and was located one kilometer north of Choam Village, Mimot District, Kompong Cham Province, Cambodia. Subcamps 1, 2, 3 had 45-man staffs. As of May-September 1974, the three subcamps were known as K-5, K-15 and K-25; K-5 was located near Katum in Tay Ninh Province, and K-15 and K-25 were located within 1,500 meters of K-5. K-5 held PAVN SVNLA offenders convicted on major criminal charges; K-15 held PAVN SVNLA offenders convicted on counterrevolutionary charges (ralliers); and K-25 held PAVN SVNLA offenders convicted on espionage charges, as well as captured GVN spies. No foreign nationals were reported in detention in this camp complex.

11. Although the SVNLA Political Staff's Military Security Office was not responsible for the administration of detention facilities for U.S. POW's or other foreign nationals, it reportedly had access to U.S. and foreign POW's who were detained in the SVNLA Political Staff's Enemy Proselytizing Office (Phong Dich Van) camp complex. [REDACTED] SVNLA Military Security Office personnel were allowed to interrogate POW's in this camp complex during the period April 1968-April 1970. Although [REDACTED] military security personnel interrogated ARVN POW's who were being considered for release, [REDACTED] pre-release military security interrogations of U.S. POW's who were released in October 1968 and January 1969 in Tay Ninh Province.

12. The SVNLA Political Staff's Military Security Office was commanded by KGB-trained Colonel Pham Thai aka Nam Thai aka Tran Quoc Hung (April 1964-August 1969) and KGB-trained Lieutenant Colonel Le Quoc Sung aka Ba Sung (August 1969 to September 1974). Deputy Chiefs included KGB-trained Major Le Quoc Sung (1966-August 1969), Lieutenant Colonel Nguyen Tai Giam aka Bay Sang (1966 to September 1974), KGB-trained Lieutenant Colonel Vu Binh aka Nam Binh (1974), Lieutenant Colonel Le Van Sen aka Nam Sen (1966-1970), and Major Le Huu Giang (67-73). As of September 1974, Colonel Le Quoc Sung supervised Technical Section 4, Interrogation Section 5, and Security Guard Section 6. Lieutenant Colonel Nguyen Tai Giam supervised Surveillance Section 2; Lieutenant Colonel Vu Binh supervised General Research Section 1, Surveillance Section 3, Surveillance Inter-Unit 75, and Detention Camps K-5, K-15 and K-25. Colonel Pham Thai had an undetermined role in

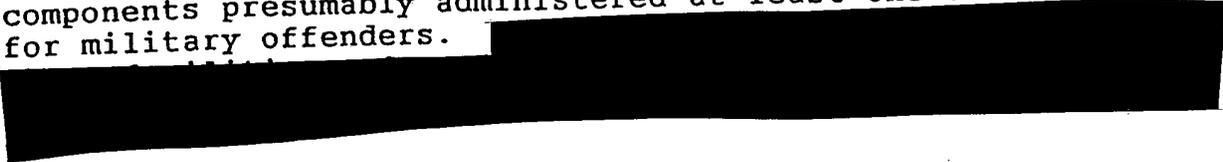
the release of POW's during the period he headed the SVNLA Political Staff's Military Security Office. Upon return to Hanoi in August 1969, Thai became an MSD deputy director in charge of operations in South Vietnam and was promoted to senior colonel rank.

13. Like its MSD Headquarters, the SVNLA Political Staff's Military Security Office sat on top of a vertical chain of command over all military region, division, sub-region and provincial military command political staff military security components, which administered at least one detention camp for military offenders. [REDACTED]

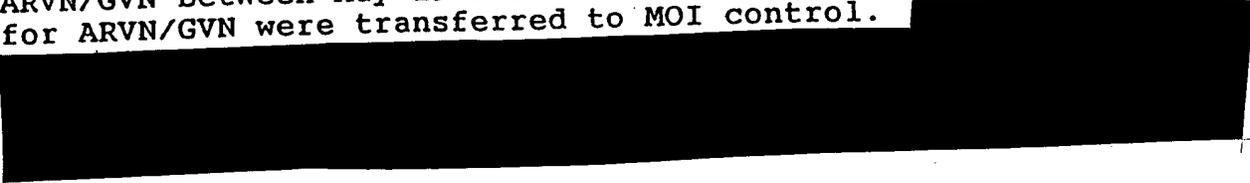
14. For example, the PAVN 1st Infantry Division had a detention camp as of September 1973 for PAVN deserters and military criminals in the Ben Van area (VS 515 776) in Banteay Meas District, Kampot Province, Cambodia. The PAVN 9th Infantry Division had the C-5 Camp with a 30-man staff for about 115 inmates in the Ta Pan area (WU 776352) of Kompong Cham Province, Cambodia. The PAVN Military Region C-40 Political Staff's Military Security Section had at least two camps as of August 1971 for PAVN offenders in Cambodia. They were: the A-35 Camp held major PAVN criminal offenders in an area (WU 393874) about 2.5 kilometers north of Thma Samlieng Village, Santuk District, Kompong Thom Province, Cambodia; and the H-50 Camp held minor PAVN criminal offenders in an area (WT 404906) about 5.5 kilometers north of Thma Samlieng Village, Santuk District, Kompong Thom Province. Military Region C-40 was established in late 1970, and was responsible for the operational area of Kompong Thom, Siem Riep, Oddar Meanchey, Preah Vihear, Battambang Province, and for Kratie and Stung Treng Provinces west of the Mekong River, Cambodia. The PAVN Military Region C-50 Political Staff's Military Security Section had four camps as of April 1974 for PAVN offenders in Cambodia. They were: the C-14 Camp had about 120 inmates in the Bau Rau area (XT 024048), Kompong Rau District, Svay Rieng Province, Cambodia; the C-15 Camp had a 50-man staff for 300 inmates in the Phtream area (WT 9825), Svay Rieng Province, Cambodia; the D-50 Camp, [REDACTED]; and the T-100 Camp, [REDACTED]. Military Region C-50 was formed in April 1972 with the merger of Military Regions C-20 and C-30 and had an operational area which covered Kompong Cham, Svay Rieng and Prey Veng Provinces, Cambodia, and northern Tay Ninh Province. As of January 1975, C-50 was headquartered in northern Phuoc Ninh District, Tay Ninh Province. The PAVN Military Region 3 Political Staff's

Military Security Office had the J-39 Camp as of January 1972 in the area of Khanh Binh Tay Village (VR 8419), Song Ong Doc District, An Xuyen Province. No foreign nationals were reported in detention at any of these camps.

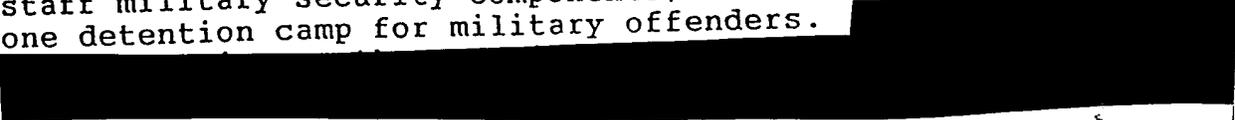
15. In the case of Laos, the MSD Headquarters Foreign Relations Office 47 monitored and supervised the Pathet Lao military security branch, whose officers were trained by the MSD, and the MSD Headquarters Battlefield Security Office 49 monitored the security situation in Laos. The MSD sat on top of a vertical chain of command over all MSD personnel and units assigned to the political staffs throughout the PAVN in Laos. Major division and brigade political staff military security components presumably administered at least one detention camp for military offenders.



16. Following the communist takeover of South Vietnam in April 1975, Hanoi established a MND Forward Headquarters in Ho Chi Minh City (HCMC) inside the headquarters compound of the former ARVN Joint General Staff (JGS) which was located adjacent to but outside the Tan Son Nhut Airbase. The MND Forward Headquarters had jurisdiction over the area from Phu Khanh and Dac Lac Provinces southward to southernmost Minh Hai Province. The MND Forward Headquarters was structured along the same general department and department lines as the MND Headquarters in Hanoi. The PAVN SVNLA Political Staff's Military Security Office relocated to HCMC and became known as the MND Forward General Political Department's MSD. The MND Forward Headquarters was given limited responsibility for the administration of a reeducation camp system for captured ARVN/GVN between May 1975 and June 1977 when all reeducations for ARVN/GVN were transferred to MOI control.



17. The MSD Forward Headquarters in HCMC sat on top of a vertical chain of command over all military region, corps (4th), division, and provincial military command political staff military security components, which administered at least one detention camp for military offenders.



18. Following the PAVN invasion and overthrow of Pol Pot's Democratic Kampuchea (DK) in early January 1979, Hanoi deployed over 200,000 combat troops in Cambodia. Five PAVN Forward Commands were established in Cambodia. Front Political Staff Department Military Security Offices had at least one temporary detention facility with a 50-man staff. Subordinate division military security offices also had at least one temporary detention camp. [REDACTED] comment on the following camps: Front 479 had the K-39 "Discipline" Camp (UV 7279) near Siem Riep City, Siem Riep-Oddar Meanchey Province which held about 250-300 military offenders on desertion and minor criminal charges. Major offenders were transferred to either Military Region 7 facilities in the southern SRV or to the MOI-B Chi Hoa Prison in Ho Chi Minh City (HCMC). The Front 479's 302nd Infantry Division had a temporary "discipline" camp at Chong Kal (UA 4643), Siem Riep-Oddar Meanchey Province which held about 60 inmates. The camp was commanded by Captain Vu Ngoc Minh and his deputy, Senior Lieutenant Nguyen Van Can. Minor offenders were held about three months before being returned to their units, while other more serious offenders were transferred for further disposition to Front 479's K-39 Camp. Front 479's Military Specialist Group 7705 for Siem Riep-Oddar Meanchey Province had its K-38 Discipline Camp at Chong Kal (UA 4543), Siem Riep-Oddar Meanchey Province. The Front 779's 317th Infantry Division had the TK-60 Reeducation Camp in Tay Ninh Province, southern SRV. Cambodian criminal suspects and captured DK and Cambodian non-communist resistance members were held a few days before being turned over to unspecified People's Republic of Kampuchea (PRK) authorities. In this MSD-administered detention system, prisoners were held under guard in barracks quarters at the battalion level. Regimental commanders had the authority to detain prisoners for up to three days; prisoners were held at the division level for a maximum of seven days; front commands could hold prisoners up to 90 days; and, their parent military regions held prisoners with sentences of more than 90 days. Except for ethnic Cambodians, no other foreign nationals were reported in detention in this MSD-administered combat zone camp system. As of 1 October 1989, all PAVN combat forces had been withdrawn from Cambodia, leaving only a small PAVN military advisory presence which should have continued its relationship with the PRK MND. At least one PAVN advisory specialist was assigned to all departments in the PRK MND's general department structure. MSD advisory specialists worked closely with their PRK MND MSD counterparts who were trained by the MSD in Vietnam.