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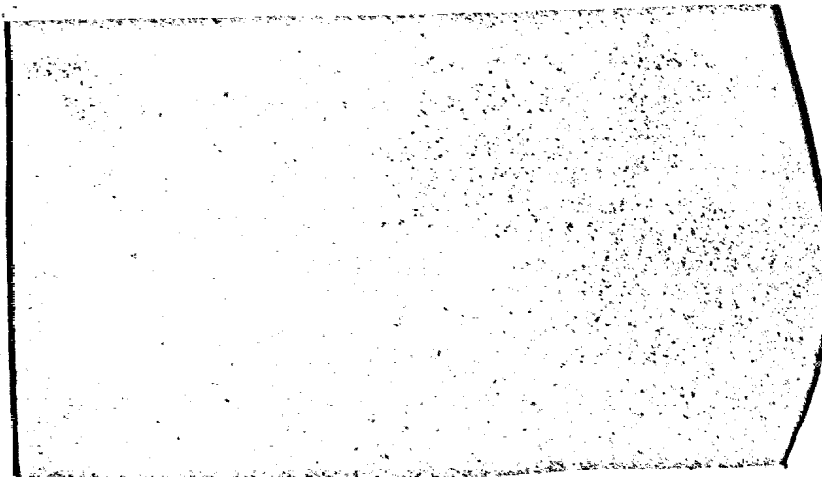
CS-317/09102/72

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21 September 1972

MEMORANDUM

SUBJECT: Sighting of Two Captured U.S. Personnel in South Vietnam,
One of Whom May Have Died in Captivity, and Possible
Suicide of a Third Prisoner



1. In mid-July 1967 [redacted] three U.S. prisoners of war (POWs) at the 1st North Vietnamese Army (NVA) Division field hospital near Chu Be Mountain (near YA810360), Le Thanh District, Pleiku Province, South Vietnam. The Americans had reportedly just been captured in a forested area about eight kilometers west of Duc Co Village (near YA838253), Le Thanh District, by the 2nd Company, 7th Battalion, 66th Regiment, 1st NVA Division. The NVA Company had been encircling the Duc Co Special Forces camp when it clashed with a Montagnard Special Forces Unit to which the Americans were attached as advisors.

2. [redacted] two prisoners, a Caucasian and a Negro; [redacted] the third American had committed suicide by biting his tongue shortly after he was captured. [redacted]

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Approved for Release
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[REDACTED] the prisoners because they were wounded, exhausted and unwilling to talk. The Caucasian prisoner died of dysentery at the hospital three days after he was captured. The Negro was evacuated to a detention camp of the Central Office for South Vietnam (COSVN). [REDACTED] had no information about the detention camp.

3. [REDACTED] description of each of the three American prisoners follows:

A. The prisoner who reportedly committed suicide was a lieutenant according to his identification card, but his name and serial number were not recalled. Among the personal effects taken from this American, was a photograph reportedly of him with a woman. The man in the photograph appeared to be about 30 years old, Caucasian, with a square face and light complexion. According to his captors, the American had been wounded in the right thigh during the engagement and they had evacuated him to a site nearby where he committed suicide. He was later buried at this site. /1/

B. The Caucasian prisoner who later died in the field hospital was about 18 years old. He weighed about 60 kilos, was about 1.70 meters tall and had an oval face, light brown hair, brown eyes, a long straight nose and a fair complexion. When captured he was slightly wounded in the neck. Through a VC interpreter this prisoner said that he was a corporal attached to a mortar element and that he was a third-year university student majoring in chemistry when he was drafted. /2/

C. The Negro prisoner weighed about 75 kilos and was of medium build; he had black, curly hair, an oval face and black eyes. He had been wounded slightly in the left shoulder. He said he was an E4 attached to a mortar element. /3/ /4/

/1/ [REDACTED] was shown the Joint Personnel Recovery Center (JPRC) POW photo album and said that the individual listed as M151 resembled most the man whose photograph he had seen.)

/2/ [REDACTED] the photo listed as D071 in the JPRC POW photo album resembled this prisoner most.)

/3/ [REDACTED] JPRC commented that the action which [REDACTED] cites in this report commenced on 12 July 1967 near YA850131 and involved elements of the U.S. 4th Infantry Division. According to JPRC, among those men who were

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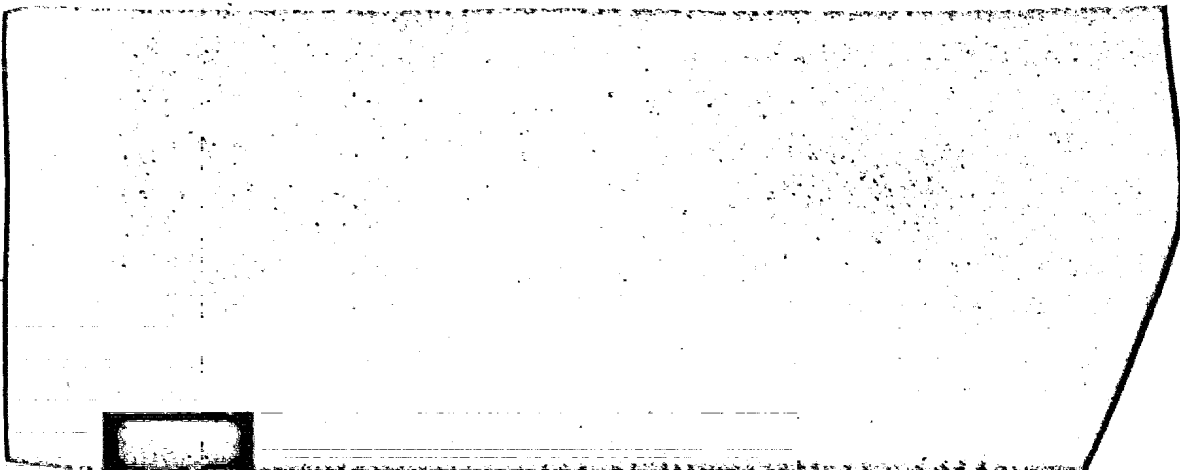
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carried as Missing In Action (MIA) out of this incident were Sgt. Cordine McMurray, RA27072511; SP4 Martin S. Frank, US51603728; SP4 James F. Schiele, US66044472; PFC Richard R. Perricone, US51586057; PFC Nathan B. Henry, US53447988; PFC Stanley A. Newell, US54807538; and SP4 James L. Van Bendegon, US56456268. JPRC says that [REDACTED] information on the three prisoners appears to be enough evidence to identify only one of the men with any degree of certitude. JPRC's comments on [REDACTED] descriptions of the prisoners are provided below:

(A. The first man described could possibly be SP4 Frank who is married and who meets the same general physical description and age, though not the rank of lieutenant. SP4 Frank is listed as MIA.

(B. Identification of the second man is sketchy at best. PFC Stanley A. Newell and SP4 Van Bendegon bear a resemblance to the photo which [REDACTED] identified and both these men are carried as captured. The age, 18, cited for the prisoner by [REDACTED] is of little value since the remaining five personnel were all 19 to 21 years of age. None of these men was a university student in his third year, but SP4 Van Bendegon had completed three years of high school education, took academic courses and preferred algebra and general science.

(C. The third man seen by [REDACTED] can be identified because of his race. Sgt. McMurray was the only Negro among those missing in this action. His physical description agrees with that given by [REDACTED], but not his age or grade. Sgt. McMurray is listed as captured.)



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