



# Intelligence Information Report

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REPORT NO.

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COUNTRY South Vietnam

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SUBJECT Viet Cong Policies and Procedures  
Regarding U.S. Prisoners of War  
in Military Region 5

*501-08(6)*

ACQ Vietnam, Saigon (10 May 1970)

FIELD NO.

SOURCE

*1.3(a)(4)*

Summary: The camp for U.S. prisoners of war held by

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STATE	DIA	ARMY	NAVY	AIR	NSA	CRS	(For Field Distribution see final paragraph)
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Approved for Release  
Date September 1993

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the Viet Cong (VC) in Military Region 5 (MR-5) was located in the Tra Khe area, Tra Bong District, Quang Ngai Province, and was run by the Quang Da Special Zone (QDSZ) Military Proselyting Section. There were also two province-level prisoner of war (POW) camps under the QDSZ. The Hon Tau camp held prisoners only temporarily, while the camp in Quang Da Province kept prisoners permanently. Dang Van Hien claims that no U.S. POWs were sent to North Vietnam (NVN), primarily because of the transportation difficulties. End Summary.

1. Each of the VC regions in South Vietnam (SVN) had one region-level POW camp where U.S. POWs of all ranks and captured Army of the Republic of Vietnam (ARVN) officers were held for debriefing and indoctrination. The VC camp for U.S. POWs in MR-5 was located in the Tra Khe area, Tra Bong District, Quang Ngai Province. It was located in a heavily forested area northwest of the Na Nieu River, about six hours' walking distance from the point where the Vien(g) River flows south into the Na Nieu River, approximately 15 kilometers southwest of Tra Bong City. The Tra Khe camp was run by the Military Proselyting Section of the QDSZ Party Committee, the chief of which was Colonel Than Tan T r i n h, aka T r i. The chief of the Tra Khe camp in late 1969 was Senior Captain (fnu) P h u o n g.

2. Two English-speaking interpreters, Lieutenants (fnu) H u n g and (fnu) N h o, who were both graduates of the Foreign Language College of Hanoi University, were assigned to the Tra Khe camp. Two other English-speaking officers, both propaganda leaflet writers, were available at the camp to interrogate and indoctrinate U.S. POWs. Both were officers of the Military Proselyting Section of the QDSZ. They were Lieutenant Colonel Nguyen T h a i, deputy chief of the Military Proselyting Section, and Senior Lieutenant (fnu) T i n h. As of late 1967, eight U.S. and 12 ARVN POWs were being held at the Tra Khe camp. (Field Comment: Dang Van H i e n visited the camp in 1967 but did not see the U.S. POWs as he stayed just one night.)

3. The administration staff of the Military Proselyting Section of QDSZ authorized the acquisition of rice for the camp through the use of a ticket system. Each month the Tra Khe camp received a ticket which was then turned in for a specific amount of rice. The administration staff provided instructions with the ticket, which indicated where the rice could be picked up. A sum of money also always accompanied the rice tickets for use in the purchase of vegetables, salt, fish, meat and other food items.

4. There were also two province-level POW camps under the QDSZ. One was located in the Hon Tau Mountains, VC Que Son District, Quang Nam Province, where prisoners were kept only temporarily; and the other, to which U.S. POWs were sent permanently, was in a forested area on the SVN/Laos border in VC Quang Da Province. (Field Comment: VC Quang Nam Province contains Government of Vietnam /GVN/ Quang Tin Province and Que Son District and portions of Duc Duc and Duy Xuyen of Quang Nam Province. VC Quang Da Province contains portions of GVN Quang Nam Province.) All captured members of U.S. and Free World Forces and ARVN officers were escorted by the capturing unit to the Hon Tau camp. When VC Main Force units captured POWs, the latter were turned over to local guerrilla units to be escorted to the Hon Tau camp. From Hon Tau the U.S. POWs immediately were escorted by the Hon Tau guards to the Tra Khe camp for debriefing and indoctrination by English-speaking interrogators. Hien claimed that primarily because of transportation difficulties, no U.S. POWs captured in SVN were sent to NVN. Hien emphasized the transportation difficulties by stating that even seriously wounded U.S. POWs were not sent north. Because all of the travel from the camp would be through heavily

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mountainous areas, it would take at least two months to travel from the region to NVN and most U.S. POWs would, in Hien's opinion, die within one week if they were forced to travel north. According to Hien, it was VC procedure to relocate a POW camp after the release of any POWs.

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5. Most U.S. troops captured in SVN were low-level soldiers or noncommissioned officers and for this reason there was no point in sending them to NVN for exploitation. In contrast, pilots captured in NVN were officers and, thus, were exploited for their information. All U.S. airmen captured in NVN were considered criminals and would be released only when the war ends. While in NVN, Hien heard NVN cadres say that even though the airmen would not be tried for committing criminal acts against the people, the NVN Government would not advise the U.S. Government concerning airmen who were captured, wounded or killed.

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6. [ ] information on the Tra Khe POW camp was kept current through conversations [ ] with VC cadres in the Military Proselyting Section, QDSZ, MR-5, concerning the treatment and handling of U.S. POWs at the camp and through Central Office for South Vietnam communiques which outlined VC procedures for handling U.S. and Free World Forces POWs. [ ] any changes in VC POW policies would have been reflected in the communiques which were disseminated throughout MR-5 in the fall of 1969. Beginning in 1967, the communiques were usually disseminated twice a year in MR-5.)

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