

INFORMATION REPORT INFORMATION RE

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REPORT NO. [ ]

DATE DISTR. 15 AUGUST 1968

COUNTRY SOUTH VIETNAM

DOI JULY 1968, EXCEPT AS STATED

SUBJECT VIET CONG POLICY AND TREATMENT OF PRISONERS OF WAR

B AF  
Held for UCR.

ACQ VIETNAM, SAIGON (24 JULY 1968)

SOURCE THIS IS A COLLATION OF AVAILABLE INFORMATION ON THE SUBJECT, WHICH WAS PREPARED IN THE FIELD BY A CAS RESEARCH UNIT. IT IS NOT FULLY EVALUATED INTELLIGENCE.

SUMMARY-- THE VIET CONG /VC/ OFFICIALLY MAINTAIN A LENIENT AND HUMANITARIAN POLICY TOWARD PRISONERS OF WAR /POWS/, BUT THIS POLICY IS NOT ALWAYS IMPLEMENTED. THE VC HAVE ISSUED NUMEROUS DIRECTIVES AND ORDERED ITS MILITARY PROSELYTING SECTIONS TO HOLD SPECIAL CLASSES ON THE POLITICAL VALUE OF POWS AND HOW TO TREAT THEM. ALMOST ALL IMPORTANT POWS ARE TRANSFERRED TO THE PROVINCE OR REGION LEVEL. THOSE PRISONERS WHO ARE KEPT AT THE VILLAGE AND DISTRICT LEVEL ARE OFTEN RELEASED WITHIN TWO MONTHS WHEREAS THOSE AT THE HIGHER LEVEL ARE HELD MUCH LONGER. THE RELEASE OF THE FREE WORLD MILITARY FORCES PRISONERS POSES A SPECIAL PROBLEM SINCE IT MUST BE DONE AT THE REGIONAL OR CENTRAL LEVEL AND THEN IN CONNECTION WITH AN INTERNATIONAL PROPAGANDA COUP. BRUTALITY TO AND EXECUTION OF PRISONERS HAVE BEEN REPORTED BUT FOR POLITICAL EXPEDIENCY THE VC CONTINUE TO ADVOCATE A LENIENT AND HUMANITARIAN POLICY. END

1. SUMMARY

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1. DOCUMENTS CAPTURED OVER A PERIOD OF SEVERAL YEARS SHOW THE OFFICIAL VIET CONG /VC/ POLICY TOWARD PRISONERS OF WAR /POWS/ AS ONE OF LENIENCY AND HUMANITARIANISM FOR POLITICAL EXPEDIENCY. HOWEVER, IT IS ALSO CLEAR THAT THERE IS A GAP OF SOME MAGNITUDE BETWEEN THE POLICY AND ITS APPLICATION. AS AN EXAMPLE OF THE POLICY, AFTER THE TET ATTACKS AND THE INCREASE IN THE NUMBER OF POWS THE VC IN MY THO PROVINCE REISSUED A BASIC DIRECTIVE ON POW POLICY WHICH EMPHASIZED THAT A LENIENT AND HUMANE POLICY CAN SPLIT THE ENEMY'S RANKS AND THAT POWS, PARTICULARLY AMERICANS, CAN BE POLITICALLY EXPLOITED.

2. THERE ARE NUMEROUS VC DIRECTIVES ADMONISHING SUBORDINATE UNITS FOR NOT ADHERING TO THE POW POLICY AND ORDERING THE MILITARY PROSELYTING SECTIONS TO SET UP SPECIAL CLASSES TO CORRECT THIS SITUATION. SEVERAL DOCUMENTS ATTEST THAT IN MANY AREAS THE POLICY IS IGNORED MOST OF THE TIME. THE PARTY CONSTANLY URGES THE CADRES TO EMPHASIZE IN THEIR CLASSES THAT KILLING, BEATING AND TORTURING POWS OR MUTILATING THE DEAD IS HARMFUL TO THE REVOLUTION. THE CADRES ARE TOLD TO MAKE THE POINT THAT IMPORTANT POWS CAN BE USED AS HOSTAGES ASSURING THE SAFETY OF CAPTURED VC AND THEIR RELEASE CAN WIN PROPAGANDA VICTORIES OF INTERNATIONAL IMPACT.

3. COMBAT UNITS ARE REMINDED CONSTANTLY TO INCREASE THE NUMBER OF POWS, ESPECIALLY AMERICANS. THEY ARE INSTRUCTED TO ISSUE ROPES TO EACH SOLDIER FOR BINDING POWS, TO TEACH THE TROOPS ENGLISH PHRASES SUCH AS "HANDS UP" AND TO TEACH SUCH TECHNIQUES AS REMOVING THE SHOES OF U.S. POWS TO HINDER THEIR ESCAPE ATTEMPTS. FURTHER, THE SOLDIERS ARE TOLD NOT TO TAKE THE PERSONAL PROPERTY OF POWS BUT TO COLLECT IT AND MAKE OUT A RECEIPT AND PASS IT ALONG WITH THE POW. THE PARTY EXPERIENCES GREAT DIFFICULTY IN GETTING INDIVIDUAL SOLDIERS TO CARRY OUT THIS POLICY.

4. ONCE CAPTURED, THE POW IS HANDED OVER TO THE VILLAGE,

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DISTRICT OR PROVINCE AUTHORITIES. IF IT HAS NOT ALREADY BEEN DONE, THE POW WILL BE PLACED IN A CATEGORY OF WHICH THERE APPEARS TO BE TWO TYPES: THE FIRST IS BASED ON THE TYPE OF UNIT AND RANK. THE LESS ELITE HIS UNIT, THE MORE LIKELY THE POW WILL BE KEPT AT A LOWER VC ECHELON, GIVEN SHORTER INDOCTRINATION AND MORE LIKELY TO BE CONSIDERED AS A POTENTIAL RECRUIT FOR THE VC. GENERALLY, THE LOWER THE RANK THE LESS TIME THE POW WILL BE HELD. THE SAME HOLDS TRUE FOR ALL FREE WORLD MILITARY FORCES /FWMF/, INTELLIGENCE AND PSYCHOLOGICAL OPERATIONS PERSONNEL AND OTHER SPECIALIST GROUPS. IN ADDITION, ENLISTED MEN, NONCOMMISSIONED OFFICERS AND OFFICERS USUALLY ARE SEPARATED IMMEDIATELY TO BREAK THE INFLUENCE OF THE HIGHER RANKING TROOPS OVER THEIR JUNIORS. THE SECOND CATEGORY IS BASED ON THE INDIVIDUAL'S ACTIONS. THOSE WHO SURRENDER IN THE EARLY STAGES OF THE BATTLE AND EXHIBIT LITTLE PERSONAL LOYALTY TO THE GOVERNMENT OF VIETNAM /GVN/ GET SPECIAL TREATMENT. SUCH POWS DO NOT HAVE TO BE BOUND BUT THEY HAVE TO ATTEND INDOCTRINATION SESSIONS. THE LEGITIMATE POW, IN THEORY, IS TO RECEIVE LENIENT, HUMANE BUT FIRM TREATMENT, AND IF HE PROVES TO BE OBSTINATE,

CERTAIN PUNISHMENTS ARE SUGGESTED, SUCH AS STANDING IN THE SUN OR BEING PUT IN ISOLATION. IN SOME DOCUMENTS DEATH IS MENTIONED AS A LAST RESORT BUT ONLY AFTER UNTYING THE POW.

5. ALMOST ALL IMPORTANT POWS ARE TRANSFERRED TO THE PROVINCE OR REGION LEVEL. WHILE ENROUTE THE POW IS USUALLY BOUND, BAREFOOT AND BLINDFOLDED AND TAKEN ON A ROUTE WHICH THE PRISONER CANNOT REMEMBER. IN CAMP THE PRISONERS ARE USUALLY UNFETTERED. THE PRISON CAMP IS USUALLY SMALL CONSISTING OF FIVE OR FEWER TENTS OR SEMIBURIED BUNKERS CONTAINING FROM 15 TO 70 INMATES. TUNNELS AND TUNNELS ARE ALSO USED. SOME CAMPS HAVE BEEN REPORTED TO CONTAIN 400 OR MORE PRISONERS. ON THE OTHER HAND, SOME CAMPS REMAIN EMPTY FOR LONG PERIODS

OF TIME. IT IS COMMON FOR PRISONERS TO BE TRANSFERRED TO SEVERAL CAMPS. USUALLY, SOME WORK IS PERFORMED, CERTAIN HOLIDAYS ARE ALLOWED AND SOME MEDICAL FACILITIES EXIST.

6. NEW PRISONERS ARE USUALLY GIVEN A BOOKLET ABOUT POW REGULATIONS OR IT IS READ TO THEM. ACCORDING TO THE DIRECTIVES, THIS IS CONSIDERED ESPECIALLY IMPORTANT IN THE CASE OF AMERICANS WHO HAVE BEEN LED BY THEIR COMMANDERS TO EXPECT INHUMANE TREATMENT.

ALL MILITARY EQUIPMENT AND DOCUMENTS ARE CONFISCATED. PRISONERS WHO DIE ARE OFTEN BURIED SECRETLY AND THEIR POSSESSIONS SENT TO THE REAR. THIS PROCEDURE APPEARS TO BE FOLLOWED BECAUSE THE VC THINK IT WOULD BE POLITICALLY EXPEDIENT TO KEEP THESE DEAD MEN "ALIVE" FOR FUTURE RETALIATORY "EXECUTIONS."

7. THE VC BOMBARD THE POWS WITH A STEADY STREAM OF INDOCTRINATION. THE TYPICAL INDOCTRINATION IS TO HAVE THE POW MEMORIZE A LESSON AND THEN REPEAT IT IN WRITTEN TESTS. IN ADDITION, THE VC USE SELF-CRITICISM SESSIONS AND HAVE THE POW WRITE A PERSONAL HISTORY STATEMENT. THE VC HAVE SET UP A SLIDING SCALE OF WHAT THEY HOPE TO ACHIEVE WITH THEIR INDOCTRINATION. AT THE OPTIMUM, THEY HOPE TO ENLIST THE POW INTO THE VC ARMED FORCES. NEXT BEST, THEY WOULD LIKE HIM TO WORK IN SOME WAY FOR THE VC. NEXT, THEY WOULD LIKE HIM TO RETURN HOME AND ASSUME AN ANTI-GVN ATTITUDE. LAST, THEY HOPE HE WILL AT LEAST STAY NEUTRAL. IF THE POW FAILS TO PASS HIS TESTS, THE CAMP AUTHORITIES USUALLY RECOMMEND FURTHER TRAINING BUT NOT ANY PUNISHMENT SINCE THE GOAL IS REHABILITATION. AT THE VILLAGE AND DISTRICT LEVEL THE PERIOD OF INDOCTRINATION RANGES FROM ONE WEEK TO TWO MONTHS, AND THE PRISONER IS ALL BUT ASSURED OF BEING RELEASED. THE INDOCTRINATION PERIOD IS LONGER FOR HIGHER LEVEL PRISONERS, AND SOME PRISONERS MAY NEVER BE ABLE TO CONVINCING THE VC THAT THEY HAVE REFORMED ENOUGH TO BE RELEASED. THE FWMF PRISONERS POSE A PROBLEM SINCE THEY USUALLY CAN ONLY BE RELEASED AT THE REGIONAL OR CENTRAL LEVEL AND THEN ONLY

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IN CONNECTION WITH SOME INTERNATIONAL PROPAGANDA COUP. THE MORE OBSTINATE FVWF POWS ARE QUIETLY EXECUTED.

8. A FEW POWS INCLUDING AN OCCASIONAL AMERICAN, ARE TRANSFERRED TO SECURITY SECTIONS WHOSE DETENTION CAMPS ARE GENERALLY OCCUPIED BY VC DESERTERS, GVN OFFICIALS AND SPIES. THE TREATMENT TENDS TO BE HARSHER, THE EXECUTIONS MORE FREQUENT, AND THE PHYSICAL RESTRAINTS MORE BRUTAL, SUCH AS THE USE OF BLINDERS AND LEG IRONS. STILL, THE ULTIMATE GOAL IN THESE CAMPS ALSO IS SUPPOSED TO BE REHABILITATION AND EVENTUAL RELEASE.

9. REGARDING THE RELEASE OF POWS THE MY THO PROVINCE DIRECTIVE ON POW POLICY STATED THAT POWS MUST BE BOUND CLOSELY TO THE REVOLUTION SO THAT THEY WILL BE LOOKED UPON WITH SUSPICION BY THE OTHER SIDE. THE DOCUMENT CONTINUES THAT BEFORE EACH RELEASE, THE POW MUST BE PROVOKED TO WRITE SOME KIND OF PLEDGE IN FAVOR OF THE NATIONAL FRONT FOR THE LIBERATION OF SOUTH VIETNAM AND MAKE COMMENTS ABOUT VC POLICIES AND THE TREATMENT AND ATTITUDES OF THE LIBERATION TROOPS. EACH RELEASE SCENE IS TO BE PHOTOGRAPHED.

10. ALTHOUGH THERE ARE NO COMPLETE STATISTICS ON THE NUMBER OF POWS RELEASED, SOME INFORMATION IS AVAILABLE. IN VC MILITARY REGION 5, THERE WERE 5,753 GVN POWS REPORTED TO BE DETAINED IN 1965. OF THE TOTAL 4,601 WERE RELEASED, 16 WERE TRANSFERRED TO SECURITY SECTIONS, 18 DIED OF SICKNESS AND 181 VOLUNTEERED TO SERVE WITH VC UNITS. A RETURNEE WHO CLASSIFIED POWS ARRIVING AT AN LINH VILLAGE, PHU YEN PROVINCE, STATED THAT 30 POWS ARRIVED IN JULY 1964, 35 IN NOVEMBER AND 110 IN DECEMBER 1965 AND NONE IN 1966. OF THESE 175 POWS, 150 WERE SENT TO PROVINCE AND 25 WERE KEPT FOR A TWO MONTH INDOCTRINATION AND RELEASED TO VC UNITS.

11. A DOCUMENT COVERING THE FIRST HALF OF 1967 FOR THE SECURITY SECTION OF BINH TAN SUBREGION REVEALED THAT OF 41 PRISONERS, ONLY SEVEN WERE RELEASED, ONE DIED, ONE WAS

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TRANSFERRED AND 32 WERE EXECUTED. THE SECURITY SECTION OF THE WESTERN NAMBO REGION REPORTED THAT IN THE SECOND QUARTER OF 1967 THERE WERE 1,450 PRISONERS. OF THESE, 23 ESCAPED, FOUR WERE SHOT ATTEMPTING TO ESCAPE, SIX WERE SENTENCED TO DEATH, AND 46 WERE EXECUTED WITHOUT SENTENCING. A VC WHO ESCAPED IN MARCH 1968 AFTER BEING SENTENCED TO THREE YEARS RETRAINING FOR ATTEMPTING TO CHIEU HOI MAINTAINED THAT THERE WERE EIGHT SECURITY COMPOUNDS IN PHUNG HIEP DISTRICT, PHONG DINH PROVINCE. HE SAID THAT THE COMPOUND CAPACITIES RANGED FRO 70 TO 120 AT THE "COURTHOUSE" WHERE UNTRIED PRISONERS WERE HELD.

AT ONE OF THESE, THE 85 PRISONERS WERE KEPT TOGETHER AND MOVED FROM COMPOUND TO COMPOUND ABOUT EVERY TEN DAYS. ABOUT 40 WERE ARMY OF THE REPUBLIC OF VIETNAM TROOPS AND ONE WAS AN AMERICAN. THE PRISONERS WERE KEPT CHAINED NEARLY 24 HOURS A DAY, BEATINGS WERE COMMON AND MEDICAL FACILITIES WERE NONEXISTENT.

12. THERE ARE SEVERAL INSTANCES, ESPECIALLY AROUND TET, WHERE GROUPS OF PRISONERS SUCH AS PROVINCIAL RECONNAISSANCE UNIT MEMBERS, INFORMANTS AND OTHER "BAD ELEMENTS" WERE MARKED FOR IMMEDIATE EXECUTION. IN ISOLATED CASES EVEN FWMF PRISONERS WERE PUT ON THESE LISTS, ALTHOUGH THIS MAY NOT HAVE BEEN DONE WITH HIGH LEVEL PARTY APPROVAL. VC POLICY CONCERNING DISPOSITION OF POWS WHEN IMMINENT DANGER ARISES IS NOT CLEAR. THERE ARE SOME DOCUMENTS SAYING TO KILL AND OTHERS SAYING NOT TO KILL UNDER SUCH CIRCUMSTANCES. THE CONTINUED RELEASE OF POWS, INCLUDING FWMF, AND THE CONTINUED APPEARANCE OF POW DIRECTIVES URGING A LESS THAN BRUTAL POW POLICY INDICATES THAT THE FUNDAMENTAL POLICY OF LENIENCY AND HUMANITY FOR POLITICAL EXPEDIENCY CONTINUES TO BE THE PREFERRED COURSE BY THE VC LEADERS.

13. FIELD DISSEM-- ATE USMACV USAID DIR JUSPAO /MR. NICKEL ON... ARV NAVFORV 7TH AIR FORCE CINCPAC PACFLT ARPAC PACAF

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