

NVN POLICY

TPM 6 - Attn: Dave, Ellis 1.3(a)(4)

Country and
Title

26 July 1968 510-26-1

501-09(6)

MEMORANDUM FOR THE RECORD

SUBJECT: Northward Movement of U.S. Civilian and Military Personnel Captured in South Vietnam

Summary: This review of 45 reports, most of which were received during late 1967 and the first half of 1968, suggests that the North Vietnamese Government, during the period May 1967 to July 1968, moved from fifty to several hundred American personnel captured in South Vietnam northward along established lines of infiltration and transport through Cambodia, Laos and across the DMZ. The North Vietnamese Government, however, did not acknowledge or allow public reference to or photography of any American prisoner in North Vietnam who had been captured in South Vietnam or Laos. In view of these facts, the population of American prisoners in NVN could be considerably larger than the number of American pilots considered captured or MIA over NVN alone. There is also some reason to assume the existence of prison camps outside the Hanoi area.

1. General remarks about infiltration routes: The reports listed in Attachment A indicate that the northward movement of American prisoners followed routes established for the infiltration of men and supplies into South Vietnam. The same roads, footpaths, guides, vehicles and systematically numbered way stations were utilized -- southward for the infiltration of NVA troops and supplies, northward for transfer of American prisoners and NVA wounded to NVN. Guard duties fell mainly to NVA soldiers; several reports mentioned NVA troops returning to NVN for medical reasons and at the same time escorting American POWs. Some reports indicated that VC and Pathet Lao troops were also used as escorts, or to man temporary detention facilities.

2. Northward movement from RVN First Corps along the Ho Chi Minh trail:

a. Americans captured in or near Hue during 1968
Tot offensive:

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(1) Reliable reports indicate that approximately 28 Americans captured in or near Hue during the 1968 Tet offensive were led south or southeast from Hue, then westward through the mountains to a holding area; there two escaped and two were released. The remainder were probably led through the A SHAU Valley, and into the pattern of infiltration roads and trails in Laos leading towards NVN. Information on the 28 POWs was reported by seven escapees (two intelligence-trained Americans, one ARVN officer and four ARVN soldiers) and two American women released by the NVA forces. The route, as reported, is shown in purple on the attached map (Attachment C). Debriefings of escaped Laotian soldiers, and a captured calendar notebook fit in with, but could not be said to confirm, the conclusion that the Tet captives were taken into NVN.

(2) The two American escapees reported that their group of 28 persons was held at "Base Camp", YD7605, about 20km due south of Hue, from 4 to 12 February. The two American escapees broke away from the group on 23 February in the vicinity of YD675000, while marching westward from Base Camp. This location was very close to the first holding area reported by the four ARVN soldier escapees.

(3) The ARVN officer who escaped stated that he was held in Hue with [REDACTED], and traveled in their group to a reception area where they were all held for one month. His chronology agrees in adequate detail with the [REDACTED] chronology. This source provided no additional information of importance. It is interesting to note that about 28 February he was told, incorrectly in part, that 10 U.S. male PWs, the two female PWs and one Filipino PW had all been taken to NVN for subsequent release and that one U.S. PW had been left behind because of health. When subject was transferred from this camp about 10 March, four U.S. PWs and one Filipino PW started out with the group but fell behind the line of march and were lost to his sight. The officer escaped on 16 March after overpowering a guard; he waved to an AirCav helicopter and was picked up, inside RVN.

(4) The ARVN soldier escapees were not part of the group of 28. They were taken through the A SHAU Valley into Laos, toward the MU GIA Pass, and did not see any

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American PWs; their only information about American PWs was received from guards at Way Station No. 4, YC9394, about 30km southeast of Hue. There they heard that an American radio operator captured in Hue had recently passed through the station enroute to Laos.

(c) The two women who were part of the group of 25, [REDACTED] together with three men from the group, were split off on the 25th of February and held not far from "Base Camp." The two women were released on 31 March, arriving at an RVN control point on 1 April 1968, within easy bus ride of Hue. One additional American PW, a helicopter pilot, was encountered at the last camp. Guards told Dr. Nelson that the helicopter pilot and two of the American men were being sent to NVA in the larger group and would be taken to NVN. [REDACTED] were asked if they would like to go to NVN, but were not in fact given the opportunity.

b. Other Americans captured in Laos and RVN First Corps from May 1967 to July 1968:

(1) In addition to the above reports dealing with transfer of 26 American prisoners taken during the Tet offensive at Hue, seven reports covering the period May 1967 to July 1968 mentioned or implied use of the Laos network of roads and trails to transfer captured Americans from RVN First Corps to NVN; fourteen Americans were reported seen on these trails - 8 by escapees, one by a rallied and three by captured NVA infiltrators. A captured diary, with entries from 9 January to 26 May 1968, stated that the owner, apparently an infiltrating NVA soldier, while in Laos on 19 April 1968, observed a camp for captured Americans.

(2) Eight escaped soldiers of the Royal Lao Army stated that during their detention by the Pathet Lao, January to June 1968, in the vicinity of HAN NATION (XD232557), they observed NVA wounded returning to NVN via the infiltration trails; on another occasion, about 15 May 1968, one of the eight PAM soldiers saw four captive Americans at XD335582 being escorted north by 80 to 100 NVA troops.

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(3) A Laotian sergeant from Volunteer Battalion (BV) 33, captured when LANG VEI was overrun on 4 February 1968, reported seeing one American PW at XD939282 on 4 February; he learned from this PW that a second American was held at the same site. He saw two additional American PWs at XD887167 on 9 February. He heard that the latter two men escaped; the first two were incapacitated by wounds. The BV-33 sergeant escaped on 13 April 1968 from a prison camp at XD999271; his interrogation report implies that one of the first two American PWs may also have been held at this camp.

(4) A Laotian guerrilla fighter escaped from a Pathet Lao prison at UG1852 in June 1967; he said that two American jet pilots, downed near PHOU KOUT (TG0983), were brought to the camp shortly before his escape, held three days, and sent onto NVN.

(5) An NVA rallied stated that his unit captured an American on Hill 832 (XD875446) and held him there from 17 to 22 January 1968; the rallied believed the soldier was sent to NVN.

(6) A captured NVA soldier stated that while infiltrating through Laos, about June 1967, he had seen one U.S. PW being escorted by about 20 armed Vietnamese; the Vietnamese escorts were led by a man with Southern accent, presumably a VC. The guards said the PW had been captured in late May 1967 when the VC overran his position.

(7) Another captive NVA soldier stated he saw two Americans on a trail in Laos in July 1967, escorted by about 30 NVA soldiers, ten of whom appeared to be sick or wounded; the source heard that the guards were going back to NVN for treatment.

3. Northward movement of captured Americans across the DMZ

a. No definite route across the DMZ could be determined from reports received; the evidence was substantial enough, however, to conclude that some of the Americans captured in First Corps of RVN were being moved into NVN across the DMZ. Nine reports and two NVN radio broadcasts mentioned a total of about 180 American POWs.

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b. A captured NVA soldier mentioned passing 15 U.S. POWs, who were walking in a northerly direction, five km north of VINH LINH Village in the VINH LINH Special Zone. Another mentioned meeting and talking to a U.S. PW in the vicinity of VINH LINH; guards stated the man had been captured on Route 9 in RVN. A third report mentioned passing a group of possibly 100 U.S. POWs in southeastern QUANG BINH. Date of information for the three reports was September to November 1967.

c. Six reports of interrogation of captured NVA soldiers mentioned American POWs still held in RVN but headed for NVN, probably via the DMZ. A captive mentioned hearing prior to May 1967, that six U.S. POWs in CAM LO District (approx. YD1250) were to be sent to the VINH LINH Special Zone and on to Hanoi. Another mentioned seeing in November 1967 two U.S. POWs in HAI LONG District (approx. YD33), walking in a northerly direction. Another mentioned seeing, in January 1968, 2 U.S. POWs bathing in a stream in PHONG DIEN District, (possibly near YD4525). A VC guard said there were five POWs in all, and that all five would be sent to NVN "to meet Uncle Ho to ask to be returned to their country." Another mentioned seeing, in late January 1968, five U.S. POWs approximately 2km from the BEN HAI River and walking north. Another source claimed to have seen, on 30 January 1968, 12 U.S. POWs in a cafe in a market town of TRIEU PHONG District, QUANG TRI Province (possibly vicinity YD25); they were being guarded and fed by an armed man in NVA uniform. Another captive claimed to have seen two captive Americans on stretchers just south of the BEN HAI River in late January 1968, and then to have seen them again in the VINH LINH Special Zone on 7 February 1968. A captured NVA soldier said that on 16 April 1968 he saw five captured American officers, in THUA THIEN Province, being taken north; the officers were captured around HUE during the Tet offensive. The report says the men were sighted 20km north of XD806288, heading east under guard to be taken north by truck. (The locations and directions given in the report were contradictory, largely discrediting the report.)

d. Disallowing the last mentioned report, the above information from captured NVA soldiers mentions four groups of POWs in NVN, totaling possibly 111, and five groups in SVN totaling possibly 32. The first four reports seem

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reasonable and definitely point to use of the DMZ for transfer of captured Americans to NVN; the latter group of reports is more vague, but also points to use of the DMZ.

a. Two radio broadcasts, one from Liberation Radio (clandestine) on 5 July 1967 and one from Hanoi domestic service on 7 July 1968, stated that Liberation Armed Forces mauled five Marine companies in a battle near the DMZ (vicinity of YD1874) on 2 July 1967 and captured "nearly" 40 U.S. Marines. An NVA soldier captured on 3 July in the same area stated that after the battle he saw captive Marines led away and was told by one of the NVA escort soldiers that 23 Marines had been captured. (Since the battle took place practically on the southern border of the DMZ, it is reasonable to assume that they were being taken to the north through the DMZ.) The monitored radio broadcasts stated that U.S. bombs fell on the captured Marines on the day of the battle, killing them. The interrogator who worked with the captured NVA soldier included a comment to the effect that the Marines had in fact lost 34 MIA in the 2 July battle; after the battle a search was made of the battlefield, and 29 bodies recovered, leaving 5 MIA. It is possible that the remaining MIA were captives taken to NVN across the DMZ. This incident is of note because it is the closest that the NVN Government has come to admitting taking PWs from South Vietnam to North Vietnam.

4. Northward movement by sea from First Corps to NVN:

There are no specific reports that such movement took place. [redacted], however, stated to a debriefer that VOA employee Willis was marched first to the sea coast, for movement to NVN by ship, and then marched back to Base Camp One (YD7005).

5. Northward movement via Laos from Second Corps:

a. Only one report was noted covering the period July 1967 to July 1968. A captured NVA senior sergeant said that while infiltrating via QUANG BINH Province, approximately August or September 1967, he had seen an American POW with a bandaged hand and swollen feet. The guards said he had been captured in a clash with the VC in KONTUM Province;

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he was the sole survivor of a team of ten men he lifted into an area of KONTUM Province. When seen, the prisoner was enroute to Hanoi.

b. Five earlier reports are worth noting briefly. Two reports mention air lift of captured Americans to NVN. The first reports that an NVA soldier captured in January 1968 said he was told by truck drivers, whom he queried in Cambodia in 1966, that they were taking captured Americans to a nearby airfield for transport to NVN, and he was told in July 1968 by a friend that some 20 American officers captured in the vicinity of TUY HOA were being taken by foot and truck to Cambodia for air transport to Hanoi. The second report from a different source says that the source saw an American PW three days walk southwest of TUY HOA, and heard that the American would be taken by truck to DAR LAC Province, where he would be put aboard a plane to NVN. Three reports with information dated 1965 indicate the sources, captured NVA soldiers, thought American prisoners were being sent via Laos to NVN. A report dating back to 1965 indicates that the source thought a downed helicopter pilot whom he had seen in captivity at YA930080 would be sent to Hanoi.

4. Northward movement via Cambodia from Fourth Corps:

a. Two reports for the period July 1967 through July 1968 mentioned transfer of captured Americans from Fourth Corps to Hanoi, and two additional reports mentioned transfer out of Fourth Corps to Cambodia. A total of 74 American PWs was allegedly involved.

b. A captured VC soldier said he saw in August 1967 one U.S. POW in DINH TUONG Province; source's battalion commander said the PW was being taken to the vicinity of XS315838 in DINH TUONG Province and would then be taken to Hanoi.

c. A captured NVA soldier said he saw on 29 January 1968 one U.S. POW at XS035156; the guards were probably VC. One guard said the man had been captured a long time ago and was enroute to Cambodia by way of VINH BINH Province.

d. A report from a "prospective source" of 525th MI Group, received in April 1968, said five officers captured at Tan Son Nhut Air Base were transported to Hanoi. The

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report implied that they had been held at a prison camp in BINH DUONG Province at XT710488, with 42 other American POWs. A similar report received about the same time claimed 39 American POWs were held by the VC in CAN THO Province and would be moved to Cambodia before 10 May 1968, then transferred to other Communist countries and released.

7. Northward movement from RVN probable or implied:

a. Two reports, one a captured VC magazine dated April 1968, and the other sourced to a captured VC lieutenant, stated that 6 crewmen of an Air Cavalry Division helicopter were captured in HAI LANG District of QUANG TRI Province; the document said they were downed on 8 February and the VC lieutenant said they were held at YD224294 as of 7 February 1968. From examination of the map, it appears that from this location the POWs could be taken either southward to the A SHAU Valley and then into Laos, or northward across the DMZ to NVN.

b. A captured NVA soldier said that in December 1967, while infiltrating, his unit passed 20 U.S. POWs "somewhere in the jungle of NVN." From the context of the report it appears that the location was not far north of the DMZ.

c. Another captured NVA soldier said that in late October 1967 he saw two U.S. POWs walking north in the northern part of QUANG BINH Province. The captives were dressed in one-piece uniforms and their guards stated that they were pilots shot down nearby. This report is mentioned because there is no information as to American pilots shot down in the area about that date; therefore, if the POWs were actually sighted, they might have come from RVN or Laos via the MU GIA Pass.

8. Additional evidence of NVA/VC policy toward captured Americans:

a. A number of captured documents, and reports of interrogation of captured NVA or VC personnel, have provided a reliable picture of NVA/VC policy toward captured American personnel. Two of these reports mention movement to North Vietnam.

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6. An NVA soldier captured in GIO LINH District of YUANG TRI Province in July 1967 stated that his unit was instructed in VC/NVA policy towards American POWs by a lieutenant from the Military Propaganda section of the 90th Regiment. The lieutenant told the NVA unit that U.S. POWs should be well fed and well treated and sent to regiment for interrogation. The men were also told that U.S. pilots shot down in the RVN were to be forwarded to NVN after reaching regimental headquarters.

c. Another NVA soldier captured in November 1967 stated that he had formerly given a weekly talk on POW policy to his VC unit; he received information concerning these policies from COSVN. The report states that "if an American were captured, he would be taken directly to regiment and interrogated, (then) sent to division to be reinterrogated. . . . After interrogation at division level was concluded . . . the prisoner would be conducted to NVN. The prisoner was sent to the North because the captors had neither adequate facilities nor food for an American prisoner in the South." Source was told that American prisoners were to be used in later POW exchanges. An NVA soldier captured in August 1968 made a similar statement, omitting reference to POW exchange.

9. Historical note: There is some historical precedent for movement of captured non-Vietnamese personnel from south to north for detention. [REDACTED], writing in the MILITARY REVIEW for December 1958, stated that French officers and men captured in a battle near SENO in southern Laos (vicinity WD0050) were marched northward, the officers a distance of approximately 900 kilometers to a prison camp northwest of Hanoi (near WK1020), and the men a distance of 500 kilometers to camps around VINH (vicinity WF78).

10. Conclusion: Although the above evidence points strongly toward the conclusion that some Americans captured in South Vietnam have been moved to NVN, there is still a possibility that the NVN authorities have found it more convenient to hold some prisoners in the Laos-Cambodia-Vietnam tri-border region, where all countries involved can

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deny responsibility. The fact that Hanoi and the Viet Cong are making an effort to conceal transfer of American prisoners to North Vietnam makes it essential that further examination be made of all reports bearing not only on transfer of captured American personnel to NVN, but also possible transfer and holding in Laos and Cambodia.

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ATTACHMENT A

List of reports used in Memorandum for the Record, 26 July 1968
Movement of U.S. Civilian and Military Personnel Captured in
South Vietnam.

<u>Paragraph</u>	<u>Report</u>	<u>Date</u>	<u>Source</u>
1.	---		
2.a.(1)	---		
2.a.(2)	IR 6028-4512-68 IR 6028-4513-68	2 Mar 68 2 Mar 68	Escaped American IO Escaped American IO
2.a.(3)	IR 6028-2031-68	2 May 68	Escaped ARVN Officer
2.a.(4)	[REDACTED]	7 Jun 68	Escaped ARVN soldiers 1.3(a)(4)
2.a.(5)	RECAP - PAC RE 525th MI Group RECAP - PAC RE 525th MI Group	Undated Undated	Released American civ Circa 3 Apr 68 Released American civ Circa 3 Apr 68
2.b.(1)	COMUSMACV MSG 16846	10 Jun 68	Captured document
2.b.(2)	[REDACTED]	24 Jun 68 1 Jul 68	Escaped Lao FAR soldier Escaped Lao FAR soldier
2.b.(3)	[REDACTED]	15 May 68	Escaped Lao BV-33 sergeant
2.b.(4)	[REDACTED]	17 Oct 67	Escaped Lao guerrilla
2.b.(5)	IR 6028-0907-68	6 Mar 68	Hallied NVA soldier
2.b.(6)	IR 6028-0479-68	30 Jan 68	Captured NVA soldier
2.b.(7)	IR 6028-0262-68	19 Jan 68	Captured NVA soldier
3.a.	---		
3.b.	IR 6028-2108-68 IR 6028-0773-68	28 May 68 14 Nov 68 29 Feb 68	Captured NVA soldier Captured NVA soldier Captured NVA soldier

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IR 6026-1078-67	15 May 68	Captured NVA soldier
IR 6028-1612-08	20 Apr 68	Captured NVA soldier
NIC REP 685/68	4 May 68	Captured NVA soldier
IR 6028-2142-68	20 May 68	Captured NVA soldier
IR 6028-0886-68	6 Mar 68	Captured NVA soldier
IR 6028-1417-68	4 Apr 68	Captured NVA soldier

FBIS Daily Report Asia & Pacific, Radio Hanoi 7 Jul 67
10 Jul 68
FBIS DR, A&P
IR 6027-3456-67
11 Jul 67
12 Aug 67
Liberation Radio 5 Jul
Captured NVA soldier

Same as 2.a.(5)

6.a. NIC REP 142/68
IR 6028-1072-68
IR 6028-1105-68
IR 6027-1775-67
NIC REP 531/68
NIC REP 273/67
7 Feb 68
Captured NVA sergeant

15 Mar 68
16 Mar 68
19 Jul 67
22 Jun 67
19 Apr 68
27 Mar 67
Captured NVA soldier
Captured NVA soldier

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6.b. IR 6028-1849-68
IR 6028-1467-68
IR 6026-0905-68
IR 6026-1272-68
9 May 68
9 Apr 68
4 Apr 68
5 Apr 68
Captured VC soldier
Captured NVA soldier
Prospective source of
525th MI Group
Prospective source of
ARVN MI

7.a. COMUSMACV MSG 1100 DTG 280454Z Apr 68, summarizing
transl. of THONG NHAT, Issue No. 15, early April 1968
Captured VC magazine
TRI-THIEN-HUE Region
IR 6028-2158-68
31 May 68
Captured VC Lieutenant

7.b. IR 6028-0615-68
18 Feb 68
Captured NVA soldier

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IR 6028-1916-68

17 May 68 Captured NVA soldier

8.a.

IR 6027-3456-67

12 Aug 67 Captured NVA soldier
(same as 3.c.)

8.b.

IR 6028-1932-68
NIC REP 267/67

18 May 68 Captured NVA soldier
24 Apr 67 Captured NVA soldier

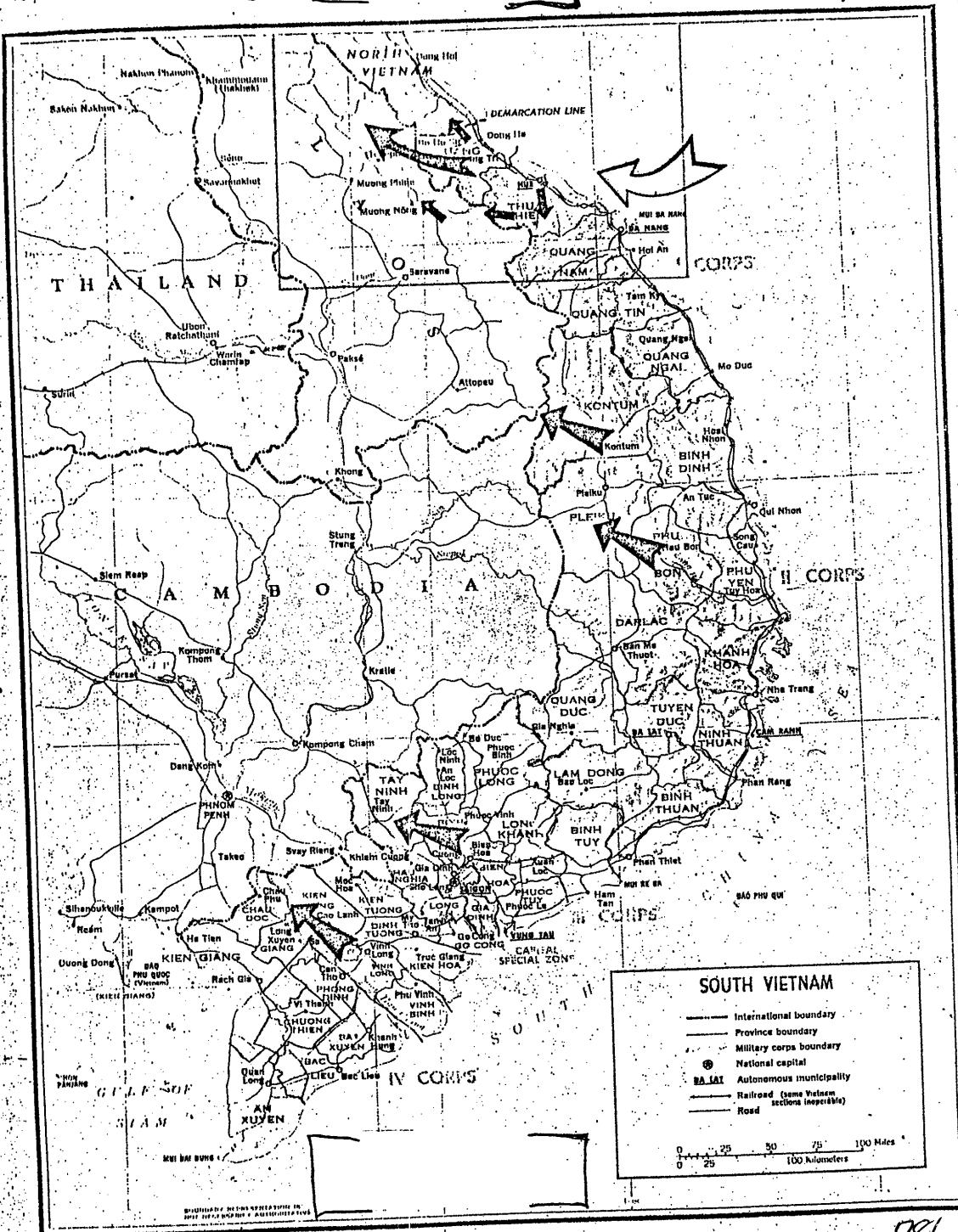
8.c.

MILITARY REVIEW
Article by [redacted]
in Indochina

Dec 58 "Communist POW Treatment

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