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COUNTRY : NORTH VIETNAM (NVN)
SUBJECT : Three Captured U.S. Pilots,
QUANG BINH Province; HON CO
Island as Possible U.S.
Dentention Camp.
DATE OF INFO : December 1966 - June 1967
DATE AND PLACE : 19 August 1967 (L-N)
OF ACQUISITION : SAIGON, Vietnam

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DATE OF REPORT : 22/8/67

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REFERENCE : None

SOURCE: []

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SUMMARY

In December 1966, Source observed three captive U.S. pilots escorted by VINH LINH security escorts during a one-day stay in VAN LA Hamlet, LUONG NINH Village, QUANG NINH District, QUANG BINH Province, NVN, before the group headed north. Source provided a description of the three prisoners who appeared in good condition except for swollen feet (kept barefooted to prevent their escape) and one American who had twisted his knee while getting of a ferryboat. While working at a factory in June 1967, Source overheard what he believed to be an intentionally indiscreet conversation among some cadres who stated that Americans were detained at HON CO, an island located about 15 kilometers from the coast near HO XA Township in the VINH LINH area, to prevent the island from being bombed. Source recalled an earlier discussion with a soldier who had said he had been on HON CO island and had seen Communist Chinese engineers supervising the construction of caves there during 1964 or 1965.

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1. Early one Sunday in December 1966, three security police escorts accompanying three American pilots (captured several days earlier in VINH LINH) arrived in VAN LA Hamlet, LUONG NINH Village, QUANG BINH Province, where Source had come to visit his aunt.
2. Source described the Americans. The higher ranking and older American (35 or 40 years of age) was 1.8 meters tall, weighed around 80 kilograms, had balding blond hair, blue eyes, a hook nose ("like a parrot beak"), looked intelligent, and had very straight posture. Another was about 30 years of age, over 1.80 meters tall, thin, weighing around 60 kilograms and had brown hair and eyes. He was the only one of three who did not have four or five days' growth of beard. The thirdman who had hurt his knee was about 33 years of age, 1.66 meters tall, weighed about 75 kilograms, had a round face and a straight nose and had balding black hair and blue eyes.
3. The security escorts reported to the hamlet chief who arbitrarily selected a house as shelter for the prisoners and their escorts. Nonhostile crowds began to gather around this house to view the prisoners whose escorts stayed in the house. By noon the owner of the house complained to the hamlet chief about the damage to his garden caused by the curious viewers. The prisoners and their escorts were then taken to an open conference shack in this same hamlet. The escorts remained outside. They left that evening and continued north.
4. From the outside looking into the shack, Source saw one American lying on a bunk while the other two were sitting on chairs. The Americans wore one-piece mud splattered dark grey outfits which bore no insignia. They had no hats, and their feet were bare and badly swollen. Although they did not appear injured, all looked sad and thoughtful and occasionally spoke quietly to each other. While Source was watching, one of the escorts brought in three bowls of chicken and rice soup which the Americans refused to eat. This same escort then brought three manioc cakes one of which was eaten by the man lying on the bunk while the other two men pocketed their cakes. A security escort told Source that the prisoners had been shot down several days earlier but did not mention the number of aircraft involved. Since the capture the group had been walking only at night to avoid detection by enemy aircraft and by day had sought shelter at the nearest village. Source knew of no other time prisoners had passed through his village. The prisoners were shoeless to prevent escape and their arms had been bound behind their backs while on the march. At the time of capture they were in good physical condition. Several days after capture while getting off a ferryboat one of the Americans had fallen and twisted his knee. He was furnished a cane and his arms were no longer bound. This was the American whom Source had observed lying on the bunk. Their clothes were mud splattered from trying to conceal themselves after parachuting. Source did not inquire as to disposition or destination of the Americans. Source did not observe the escorts conversing with the prisoners so assumed the escorts did not speak English.
5. In early June 1967 Source overheard a conversation at the factory in which he worked. Three cadres who were talking about the detention of American prisoners said that Americans were detained at HON CO, an island located about 15 kilometers from the coast near HO YA Township in the VINH LINH area. This island is close to the Demilitarized Zone, and it was believed that the prisoners were held there to prevent the enemy from bombing the island. It seemed to Source that the cadres were intentionally indiscreet in discussing where the prisoners were located. Source then recalled an

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earlier discussion with a soldier who had been on HON CO who had said he had seen Communist Chinese engineers supervising the construction of caves on the island during 1964 or 1965. This soldier did not mention the purpose of these caves nor did Source know if a relationship existed between the caves and the fact that the prisoners were kept there.

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