

5 December 1972

MEMORANDUM

SUBJECT: Possible Deaths of Two Downed U. S. Pilots in Thanh Hoa
Province, North Vietnam, on 26 September 1971

December

1. At about 0900 hours local time on 26 December 1971, Le Duy Chien saw four U. S. jets flying from the South China Sea toward the Ham Rong Bridge, which is north of the Thanh Hoa Provincial capital, Thanh Hoa Province, North Vietnam. Chien was four kilometers north of the bridge and saw the four U. S. jets bombing it. After the attack, the jets flew off in the direction of the South China Sea. Five minutes later (0935 local) four more jets attacked the bridge. The second group of jets received a barrage of North Vietnamese anti-aircraft fire, and the lead plane was hit and set afire. The plane fell to the ground and exploded. No parachutes were observed. /1/

/1/Source was shown pictures of U. S. aircraft and identified the plane which was shot down as an F4.

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2. At about 1100 hours on 26 December 1971, Source saw the crash site of the plane, which was about four kilometers southeast of the Ham Rong Bridge. Fragments of the plane and pieces of the bodies of two U. S. pilots were scattered all over the area of the crash. People at the site of the wreckage told Source that North Vietnamese public security agents had removed three legs intact from the cockpit of the plane wreckage and had taken them away. The fourth leg was not found.

3. One week later the North Vietnamese People's Army newspaper reported that the evidence collected by the North Vietnamese public security agents at the site of the plane crash indicated that the two U. S. pilots were a Major and a Captain. The newspaper account also mentioned the two pilots' names but Source was unable to remember them.