

CS 09034/71

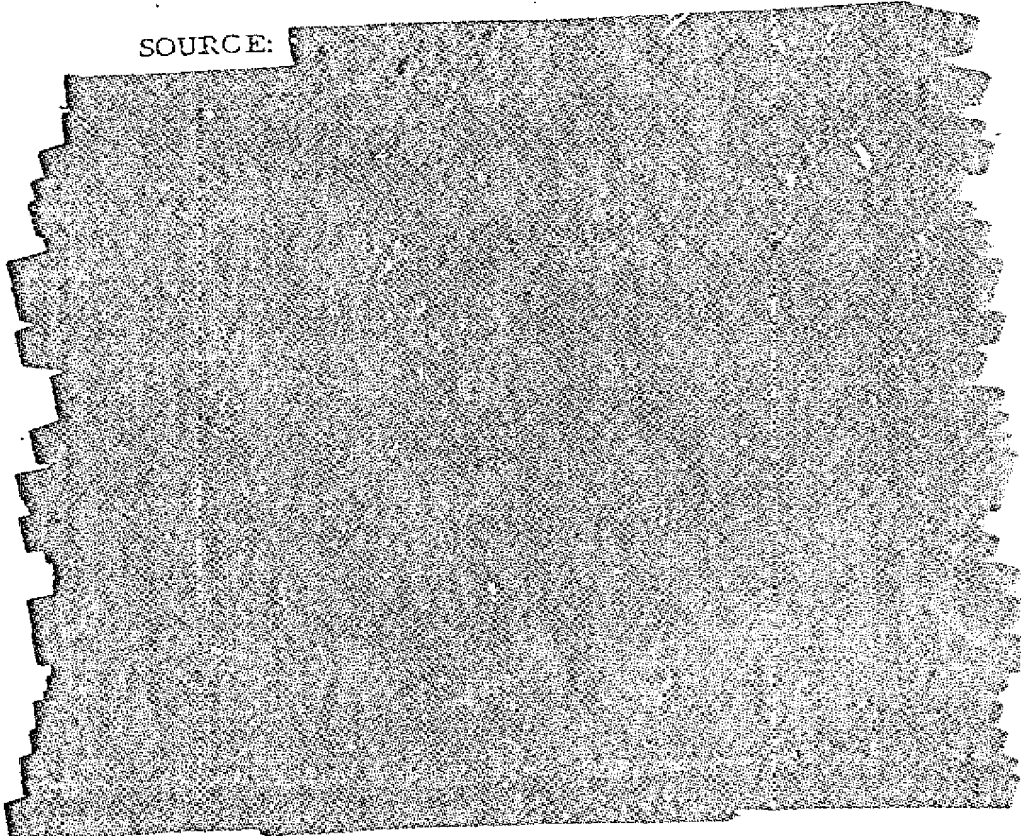
11 August 1971



MEMORANDUM

SUBJECT: Detention of Three U.S. Prisoners of War in Dam Doi District, An Xuyen Province, South Vietnam

SOURCE:



*see
p. 4*

1. From 1964 until July 1970 the A-8 Prisoner of War detention camp, subordinate to the Viet Cong (VC) Propaganda and Training Section of the VC Military Region 3 (MR-3), was located on the banks of the Cai

EXCL'D GDS



[REDACTED] [REDACTED]

Ngai river (WQ 1573) in Dam Doi district, An Xuyen province, South Vietnam (SVN). In mid-July 1970 orders were received to move the prison to the COSVN base camp area.* From at least January 1970 until 19 July 1970, the camp held three U.S. Army personnel as prisoners.

2. All three of the U.S. prisoners were captured in Tan Phu and Tan Loc villages, An Xuyen province, SVN, but the date of capture is unknown. One of the men was known as First Lieutenant Brown; he was 1.69 meters tall, weighed 65 kilograms, had blond short hair and a receding forehead. His eyes were hazel, and his complexion was fair. He had a slim build and no visible scars, tattoos or birthmarks. His prominent facial features were a rounded chin and a straight, flat nose. His estimated age was 35 years. The second man was an Army sergeant who was around 1.60 meters tall, weighed 60 kilograms, had blond short hair and very light hazel eyes. He was slender and appeared approximately 40 years old. His nose and chin were pointed and straight. The sergeant had no visible scars, tattoos or birthmarks. His complexion was very pale. The third man was an Army captain whose height was around 1.70 meters, weighing over 70 kilograms, with blond hair, hazel eyes and a light, ruddy complexion. He had no distinguishing birthmarks, scars or tattoos, except for flesh wounds on his right arm, the right side of his waist, and his right leg which he received during his capture. He had a heavy build and appeared approximately 33 years old.**

3. Each man was jailed separately in a wooden hut raised off the muddy ground by stilts. Each hut was approximately 3.5 meters wide, 4 meters long and 3.5 meters high. The huts had no windows and only one door which could be locked with a metal hasp lock. "Monkey bridges" (large logs raised above the ground by stilts) afforded the only access to the cells and other buildings of the camp. The cells were approximately 50 meters apart in order to isolate the prisoners, while an interrogation

* [REDACTED] Comment: [REDACTED] stated that it was probable that the camp moved out of the area by the end of July 1970. [REDACTED] did not know the new location of the camp.

** [REDACTED] Comment: Photographs of all U.S. personnel missing or suspected of being captured in An Xuyen province were obtained from the Joint Personnel Recovery Center (JPRC), Saigon, and shown to [REDACTED]. He was unable to make a positive identification from these photos.

[REDACTED] R-2 [REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

room similar in construction to the cells was some 90 meters from the cells. Approximately 80 meters from the prisoners' huts were quarters for the guard platoon which housed approximately 35 personnel. In addition, there were separate huts for the camp director's office and kitchen. The surrounding topography was flat, muddy and impossible to travel by land. The only way out of the camp was by sampan. There was a small pier with a guardhouse located some distance from the camp.

4. With the exception of the Army captain, the prisoners were treated leniently and allowed liberal privileges. They were permitted to move about in their huts and could leave to eat in the kitchen or go to the latrine provided they notified the guards. They were not escorted, but were watched by the guard on duty. The only restriction placed on the men was that they could not talk or congregate among themselves. The two prisoners with liberal privileges were given soap, washcloths, toothpaste and toothbrush, two pairs of pajamas and eating utensils, and they were allowed to keep these items in their cells. A bamboo mat and a mosquito net were given to each man, but there was no other furniture. In strong contrast to the treatment given to these two prisoners, the Army captain was chained to a metal bar which traversed the length of his cell. A metal ring was attached to both the bar and his foot. He could stand up and move back and forth within his cell, but only with great difficulty. The guards brought him food, and two guards escorted him outside to the latrine. Although he had a mosquito net and mat, he was not allowed to keep any other items and was given soap, toothbrush and eating utensils just before bathing or eating. The captain was treated in this manner because he had attempted to escape from the camp on two occasions. When he was captured the second time, one of the guards, Tu Bac, beat him on the head with the blunt end of an axe. Because of his escape attempts and his adamant refusal to cooperate with his captors, the guards were very harsh with him, and some of the methods of treatment were directly contrary to the camp director's orders. After each escape attempt, the camp director, Muoi Hong, told the staff that the captain was not to be beaten or mistreated, but the guards felt that they had lost face because of the incidents and took it out on the prisoner. After the beating, the captain still refused to cooperate with the captors, was chained to the bar in his hut, and his food ration was cut in half.

5. The prisoners were fed twice a day, at approximately 0900 and 1600 hours each day. They were given fish and vegetable soup, dried shrimp, crab meat, cuttle fish and rice, although not all at each meal.

[REDACTED]

They received about half a kilogram of this fare per day plus all the rice they could eat. The Army captain, however, received half this ration. The lieutenant and sergeant were allowed to go into the kitchen and eat with the guards and after dinner they smoked cigarettes and attempted to converse with the guards. The lieutenant ate first and then returned to his cell before the sergeant was allowed to eat. Two guards brought the captain's food to his cell. The prisoners were in good health and did not look undernourished. The captain, although receiving half rations, appeared stocky and strong both physically and psychologically. A medical technician from the F-20 medical unit of MR-3 came once to examine the prisoners but did not administer any medication or treat them. No vitamins were given to the men. On one occasion the sergeant, who claimed to be a medical technician, examined one of the staff members for a bad tooth. The sergeant was not allowed to administer to his fellow prisoners.

6. The prisoners occasionally were taken into an interrogation room set apart from the cells. Between 11 and 19 July 1970, for example, the captain was interrogated twice and the other two prisoners once each. Each session lasted about two hours. There were two North Vietnamese interrogators, Hai Duong and Hai Phong, and one interpreter, Ba Sanh, South Vietnamese [REDACTED] Ba Sanh that the captain was the only one who refused to cooperate; he would not even give his name or serial number. Attempts at indoctrination were as futile as physical threats. A team of photographers from the Propaganda and Training Section of MR-3 headquarters came into the camp and tried to take pictures of the captain, but he refused and turned his head away from the camera. The other two prisoners cooperated and identified the captain to the interrogators.*

7. [REDACTED] interrogation reports prepared by Ba Sanh [REDACTED] were written in English; no Vietnamese was used. [REDACTED] the reason for this was to preclude unauthorized personnel from learning about the prisoners or the [REDACTED]

* [REDACTED] Comment: [REDACTED] stated that the lieutenant also had provided drawings of installations, but [REDACTED] did not know which ones.

information collected. [REDACTED]

[REDACTED] the English reports were sent out from the camp by messenger once a week to MR-3 headquarters. He did not know the number of reports [REDACTED]

8. [REDACTED] the two interrogators were very friendly to the prisoners, but they had difficulties with the Army captain. They attempted to indoctrinate the officer many times, but to no avail. [REDACTED] did not know what success the interrogators had with the other two prisoners. The interpreter also was friendly and occasionally would converse with the prisoners about their personal health and welfare. As a general rule, the support staff and interrogators, with the exception of the guards, were friendly and humane toward the prisoners.

9. The security of the camp was maintained by the 35 guards housed in the camp area and there were no other units in the immediate area to provide back-up security in case of attack by U.S. forces. There was a perimeter guard assigned to prevent personnel from entering the camp via the river. One security guard was posted near the cells and performed a roving check of the three cells continuously. The guards possessed K1 and K2 sub-machine guns, M1 carbines, AK-47's and one U.S.-made automatic weapon. The interrogators carried K-54 and B-38 pistols on their person at all times. [REDACTED] there was no radio transmitter but that he had seen a Philips radio receiver, made in Holland, and a tape recorder. The only way to get word outside the camp was by messenger and then only at night because of the danger of being detected by the enemy. Personnel were allowed to leave only when on duty. While off duty, the guards and staff were restricted to

[REDACTED] Comment [REDACTED]

[REDACTED] one of the reports from the lieutenant concerned an outpost in An Xuyen province, phonetically spelled Lich Su, and that a diagram was attached to the report. [REDACTED] was tested at the [REDACTED] on his command of English, both written and oral, and it was determined that he was not capable of understanding any more than the rudiments of written English and could speak approximately 150 words of English. [REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

the base and prepared food, read, played cards or slept. On 19 July 1970, [REDACTED] the entire camp was moving to the COSVN headquarters in Cambodia and that they were leaving the next day. [REDACTED]

[REDACTED] the assistant director of the camp that all the personnel and the prisoners would be kept at COSVN. *

Comment: As stated in paragraph 1-C of CS 311/02642-71, the preliminary report on these U.S. Prisoners of War was shown to the Joint Prisoner Recovery Center (JPRC), which advised that the physical descriptions of two of these POW's matched those of Lieutenant Bowers and Sergeant Baez, who were missing in action together on 24 March 1969. They added that one of the physical descriptions also matched that of Sergeant First Class Parrish, who was missing in action on 16 January 1968. The above report has also been shown to JPRC for their comments, and they have nothing additional to add on First Lieutenant Brown (thought to be Bowers) or Sergeant Parrish. With regard to the recalcitrant captain, the JPRC advised that the physical description is similar to that of a U.S. Marine Corps Captain Donald Cook, who was captured near Tay Ninh (MR-3) on 31 December 1964. He was reputed to be very uncooperative with his captors. This was learned from SP4 Charles Crafts, who was in the same camp with Cook from January 1965 to February 1967, and later repatriated. Crafts reported that Cook had been determined to escape. JPRC added that there is no record of a captain fitting Cook's description captured or missing in action in MR-4. However, they state that a captain currently carried as missing in action (Captain Welshan) has black hair, brown eyes, a swarthy complexion and was downed in that area.