

CMDR

WALDEN

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~~HANOI CORRESPONDENT CAPTURED PILOT~~

HANOI CORRESPONDENT'S DISPATCH IN ENGLISH TO PRENSA LATINA
HAVANA ~~1205 GMT 9 NOV 67~~

(TEXT) NHAN DAN ON 9 NOVEMBER CARRIES A STORY ABOUT THE U.S.
PILOT MCCAIN WHO WAS CAPTURED ON 26 OCTOBER AFTER HIS PLANE
HAD BEEN SHOT DOWN OVER HANOI.

HIS FLIGHT ON A RAID AGAINST HANOI WAS THE FIRST FOR HIM
AND HIS 232 RAIDING FLIGHT OVER NORTH VIETNAM. MCCAIN WAS
VERY AFRAID OF THE (?INTENSE) ANTI-AIRCRAFT NETWORK IN HANOI,
WHICH IS NOT ONLY (?INTENSE) BUT VERY ACCURATE. THAT IS WHY IT
BECAME IMPORTANT. THREE OUT OF 25 AIRCRAFT OF HIS GROUP WERE
DOWNED. THE UNITED STATES IS NOT ABLE TO BEAR IT IF OUT OF
EVERY 25 AIRCRAFT THREE ARE DOWNED, HE SAID.

MCCAIN STATED THERE IS NOT ANY DOUBT FOR ME; THINGS ARE
TAKING PLACE IN A FAVORABLE WAY FOR NORTH VIETNAM. IN PARTICULAR,
BEFORE WORLD OPINION AT PRESENT, THE UNITED STATES IS (?VIRTUALLY)
STANDING ALONE.

INTERVIEW WITH MCCAIN

HANOI VNA INTERNATIONAL SERVICE IN FRENCH 1339 GMT 9 NOV 67 B

(INTERVIEW OF AMERICAN POW LT CDR JOHN SIDNEY MCCAIN PUBLISHED IN 9 NOVEMBER NHAN DAN)

(EXCERPT) HANOI 9 NOVEMBER--(PASSAGE OMITTED ON CIRCUMSTANCES BEHIND MCCAIN'S TRANSFER FROM CARRIER FORRESTAL TO ORISKANY AND HIS CAPTURE ON TRUC BACK LAKE ON 26 OCTOBER 1967)

TO A QUESTION OF THE CORRESPONDENT, MCCAIN ANSWERED: "MY ASSIGNMENT TO THE ORISKANY, I TOLD MYSELF, WAS DUE TO SERIOUS LOSSES IN PILOTS WHICH WERE SUSTAINED BY THIS AIRCRAFT CARRIER (DUE TO ITS RAIDS OVER NORTH VIETNAM TERRITORY--VNA) AND WHICH NECESSITATED REPLACEMENTS. FROM 10 TO 12 PILOTS WERE TRANSFERRED LIKE ME FROM THE FORRESTAL TO THE ORISKANY. BEFORE I WAS SHOT DOWN WE HAD MADE SEVERAL SORTIES. ALTOGETHER I MADE ABOUT 23 FLIGHTS OVER NORTH VIETNAM."

MCCAIN ADMITTED THAT HE PARTICIPATED FIVE OR SIX TIMES IN THE ATTACKS ON THE HAIPHONG SECTOR.

FEAR STILL CLEARLY SHOWED ON HIS FACE WHEN HE RECALLED HIS DISASTROUS SORTIE ON 26 OCTOBER AGAINST HANOI. "THE BRIEFING WAS HELD IN THE MORNING," HE SAID. "THAT'S RIGHT. I REMEMBER THAT IT WAS IN THE MORNING THAT THEY TOLD ME OF THE SITUATION AND THE PLAN OF THE RAID, WHICH SHOULD TAKE PLACE ABOUT NOON. A RECONNAISSANCE OFFICER EXPLAINED THIS PLAN TO ME. THEY SHOWED ME PHOTOGRAPHS OF MY TARGET AND MARKED OUT THE PATHS TO BE FOLLOWED BY THE ORISKANY AT THIS POINT. THEY POINTED OUT TO ME A NUMBER OF ANTI-AIRCRAFT POSITIONS NEAR HANOI AND A NUMBER OF POSSIBLE ROCKET POSITIONS, THE POSITION OF OUR RESCUE SHIPS, THE RADIO FREQUENCY, THE COMPOSITION OF THE FLIGHT, AND SO FORTH. UPON ARRIVAL NEAR THE TARGET, OUR FORMATION, WITH SIX BOXERS, WOULD MOUNT THE ATTACK ACCORDING TO THE FOLLOWING ORDER: I WOULD BE NUMBER THREE, AND THE CHIEF OF THE FORMATION, NUMBER ONE. EACH PILOT WOULD HAVE TO APPROACH THE TARGET FROM DIFFERENT DIRECTIONS; THE CHOICE OF WHICH WOULD BE LEFT TO THEM."

"WHILE MOVING TOWARD THE TARGET, WE STUMBLED OVER A VERY DENSE NETWORK OF FIRE, A VERY POWERFUL RIPOSTE. A FEW ROCKETS WERE SEEN. OUR CHIEF TURNED TO APPROACH THE TARGET AND I FOLLOWED HIM AT A DISTANCE. AT THE TIME WHEN I WAS PREPARING TO DROP MY BOMBS--I DID NOT KNOW WHETHER OR NOT I COULD DROP THEM, BECAUSE THINGS WERE HAPPENING TOO FAST--I HEARD A TERRIBLE EXPLOSION WHICH SUCKED MY PLANE AND SENT IT TOWARD THE GROUND. IT WAS HIT SO VIOLENTLY THAT I WAS THROWN ON MY BACK AND WENT STRAIGHT TOWARD THE GROUND. IN THIS POSTURE, I TRIED TO PULL THE DIRECTION-STICK

I DO NOT KNOW AT WHAT ALTITUDE, BUT AT THE TIME WHEN THE PLANE WAS FALLING TOO FAST. WHEN THE PARACHUTE OPENED I LOOKED DOWN AND FOUND OUT THAT I WAS GOING TO FALL INTO A LAKE. I WAS REALLY LUCKY TO BE ABLE TO FALL INTO A LAKE. ALL AROUND ME BOMBS WERE EXPLODING WHILE ROCKETS AND ANTI-AIRCRAFT SHELLS WERE STREAKING THROUGH THE SKY. I HIT THE LAKE AND WENT TO THE BOTTOM. WHILE TRYING TO RETURN TO THE SURFACE, I WAS SEIZED BY VIETNAMESE AND PUSHED TO THE BANK OF THE LAKE. THEY DISARMED ME AND BROUGHT ME TO PRISON."

"WHAT DO YOU THINK OF HANOI'S FIRE BARRAGE?" ASKED THE NHAN DAN CORRESPONDENT.

MCCAIN CRIED OUT: "VERY INTENSE, VERY ACCURATE. WHEN A FIRE BARRAGE IS SO ACCURATE, ONE HAS TO RECKON WITH IT. YOU ARE EXCELLENT ARTILLERYMEN. NATURALLY, I HAVE NEVER SEEN SUCH A FIRE NETWORK, BECAUSE IT WAS THE FIRST TIME THAT I FLEW OVER HANOI."

"WERE ALL THE PILOTS WHO HAD FLOWN OVER HANOI AFRAID OF THE FIREPOWER FROM THE GROUND?"

"YES, CERTAINLY!" MCCAIN SAID. "HOW LUCKY ARE THOSE WHO DO NOT HAVE TO COME OFTEN TO THE HANOI SECTOR. VERY DANGEROUS! BECAUSE THEY COULD VERY EASILY BE SHOT DOWN, HIT, SOMETHING THAT NO ONE WANTS! WHEN I ARRIVED NEAR MY TARGET I SAW TWO ROCKETS STREAKING BY MY SIDE, AND IT WAS TERRIBLE TO SEE. THEY FLEW VERY FAST, VERY STRONGLY."

SUDDENLY THE AIR PIRATE WAS SILENT AS IF STILL OBSESSED BY THE MEMORY OF HIS DISASTEROUS SORTIE.

"FOR ME," HE CONCLUDED, "THERE IS NO LONGER ANY DOUBT. THINGS ARE TAKING PLACE IN A FAVORABLE OPINION. THE UNITED STATES AT PRESENT SEEMS TO BE STANDING ALONE, SO MUCH IS ITS ISOLATION."