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MEMORANDUM FOR

Assistant Vice Director for Collection
Management
Department of Defense

165

Director, Vietnam, Laos and Kampuchea
Bureau of East Asian and Pacific Affairs
Department of State

SUBJECT

1. Purported Location and Identification of the
Remains of a U.S. Military Officer in the
Socialist Republic of Vietnam (SRV); Private
Efforts in the SRV to Purchase the Remains of
U.S. Military Personnel Missing-In-Action (MIA)

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

DATE: 11 APRIL 1983

DISTRIBUTION:
STATE
DIA
NSA

[REDACTED]
DCI
DDCI
EXEC DIR

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

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CENTRAL INTELLIGENCE AGENCY
WASHINGTON, D. C. 20505

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Bureau of East Asian and Pacific Affairs
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U.S. Military Personnel Missing-In-Action (MIA)

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

1. Attached as of possible interest to you is a report
obtained [REDACTED]

[REDACTED] in late February 1963 and
provided information concerning (1) the purchase by an ethnic
Vietnamese private trader of dog tags purported to belong to a
U.S. Military Officer, and (2) the attempts by an ethnic Chinese
merchant from Cholon, in the southern SRV, to purchase the
remains of any U.S. Military personnel found in the SRV.

[REDACTED]

cc: DCI
DDCI
Exec Dst
D/DDI
STATE/EAP
DIA
NIO/EAP
NSA

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

SUBJECT: Purported Location and Identification of the Remains of a U.S. Military Officer; Private Efforts in the Socialist Republic of Vietnam to Purchase the Remains of U.S. Military Personnel Missing-in-Action.

1. In February 1983 [REDACTED] purchased the dog tags and remains of an individual purported to be a U.S. military officer from a Bahnar tribesman for 15,000 Socialist Republic of Vietnam (SRV) Dong. (Headquarters Comment: U.S. \$1.00 equals nine SRV Dong at the SRV-pet rate of exchange.) [REDACTED] buried these remains 10 kilometers south of Qui Nhon, Nghia Binh Province, SRV. The Bahnar tribesman, who claimed that the deceased had been a U.S. Lieutenant Colonel, had found the remains one kilometer from An Truong Village. The dog tags carried the name ((Smith)), Lee. Comment: [REDACTED] visited the site where the remains had allegedly been found and identified An Truong as an area populated by Bahnar tribesmen four kilometers from the Dong Pho Traffic Police checkpoint on Route 19 to the east of the An Khe Pass, Nghia Binh Province.) (Headquarters Comment: The Bahnar, a Mon-Khmer ethnic group, seem to continue to live concentrated in the area north of the Darlac Plateau in the western portion of Nghia Binh Province, northwestern Phu Khanh Province and southeastern Gia Lai-Cong Tum Province. The individual identified as Lieutenant Colonel Smith is definitely not an unaccounted for U.S. military officer.) The Bahnar tribesman could provide no further information on the circumstances of the discovery of the remains. Before [REDACTED] bought the remains he had discussed the matter with friends and relatives in Qui Nhon, as well as with unidentified contacts in Ho Chi Minh City.

2. In late February 1983 [REDACTED] buried the remains of the alleged U.S. military officer in the yard of a meat pastry seller named (LNU) ((Son)), at the base of a lemon tree. Son's house was located south of the Bleu Tri Bridge, 10 kilometers south of Qui Nhon City on Highway No. One. A road led to Son's house from a church on the left side of the highway. Son's house was approximately 200 meters from the church. [REDACTED] planned to sell the remains for a profit to an ethnic Chinese businessman who hoped that the remains would facilitate his

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

resettlement in the U.S. [REDACTED] Comment: [REDACTED] claimed the ability to draw an exact map of the location of the remains. [REDACTED] left the dog tags with his brother in the SRV before he fled the country.)

3. [REDACTED] through at least late February 1983 several ethnic Chinese businessmen from Cholon in Ho Chi Minh City Municipality in the southern SRV were offering to purchase the remains of U.S. military personnel. These businessmen believed that providing information leading to the recovery of such remains would assist them in their efforts to resettle in the U.S. under the provisions of the Orderly Departure Program and that the relatives of the U.S. military personnel whose remains were recovered would sponsor their resettlement. An ethnic Chinese merchant located at 99 Luong Nhu Hoc Street in Cholon was offering four taels of gold for the remains of any U.S. military personnel found in the SRV. The merchant also offered an additional bonus of 5,000 SRV Dong for dog tags as proof of identification. Although these offers by the ethnic Chinese merchants were well known in the area, most individuals were reluctant to become involved, believing that such involvement would ultimately come to the attention of the SRV Ministry of Interior (Bo Noi Vu/BNV) and would result in an investigation by BNV Political Security Department officers. These individuals felt that they would be questioned on their overseas contacts and probably relocated if charges of having used such contacts to report the location of remains of U.S. military personnel were substantiated. (Headquarters Comment: One tael of gold equals 37.8 grams.)

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