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SUBJECT: PILOT EMMET KAY'S ASSOCIATION WITH CIA

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BY EDWARD K. DELONG

WASHINGTON (UPI) -- CIVILIAN CONTRACT PILOT EMMET KAY, THE FIRST CONFIRMED AMERICAN POW IN LAOS SINCE LAST FEBRUARY'S CEASE-FIRE THERE, WAS THE VICTIM OF A SHADOWY WAR THE CENTRAL INTELLIGENCE AGENCY HAS FOUGHT IN AND FINANCED FOR A DECADE.

DETAILS SURROUNDING KAY'S WORK -- AND HIS CAPTURE -- ARE AS CLOUDY AS THE WAR ITSELF AND ONLY THE BROADEST OUTLINES ARE VISIBLE.

DID KAY FLY MISSIONS FOR THE CIA? THE COMPANY HE WORKED FOR SAYS "NO." A KNOWLEDGEABLE CONGRESSIONAL INVESTIGATOR SAYS THAT THE FLIGHT MAY HAVE BEEN PAID FOR ON PAPER BY ANOTHER U.S. AGENCY BUT THAT THE MAJORITY OF SUCH FLIGHTS PRABABLY WERE ACTUALLY FOR THE CIA.

AND IN THE LAOTIAN CAPITAL OF VIENTIANE, OFFICIALS SAID KAY WAS ON A "ROUTINE" MISSION -- FERRYING AT LEAST FOUR CIA-RECRUITED GUERRILLA SOLDIERS -- WHEN HIS SMALL PROPELLER-DRIVEN PLANE WENT DOWN MAY 7 OVER COMMUNIST TERRITORY IN BAD WEATHER WHILE ENROUTE TO A LAOTIAN GOVERNMENT OUTPOST AT BOUAM LONG, 18 MILES NORTHEAST OF THE PLAIN OF JARS.

CONGRESSIONAL REPORTS SUGGEST KAY WAS ONE OF PERHAPS MORE THAN 500 AMERICANS WORKING FOR CONTRACT AIRLINES AND CARRYING SUPPLIES AND IRREGULAR TROOPS HIRED BY THE CIA TO FIGHT THE COMMUNISTS IN LAOS. THIS CIA SUPPORT BEGAN IN 1962.

THE CIA, IN KEEPING WITH ITS USUAL POLICY CONCERNING THE SECRET WAR IN LAOS, REFUSES TO MAKE ANY COMMENT.

KAY WORKED FOR CONTINENTAL AIR SERVICES, INC., A "DISTANT SUBSIDIARY" OF CONTINENTAL AIRLINES. HIS CAPTURE WAS DISCLOSED AFTER PATHET LAO OFFICIALS CLAIMED JUNE 1 TO HAVE CAPTURED AN AMERICAN MAJOR. ALTHOUGH KAY IS A CIVILIAN, THE COMMUNISTS SAID HE WAS A MILITARY PILOT.

THE STATE DEPARTMENT ACKNOWLEDGED FRIDAY THAT OFFICIALS FROM THE U.S. EMBASSY IN VIENTIANE HAD BEEN MEETING WITH COMMUNIST PATHET LAO OFFICIALS TO DISCUSS TERMS FOR KAY'S RELEASE.

A SPOKESMAN FOR CONTINENTAL AIRLINES IN CALIFORNIA CONTACTED SATURDAY SAID KAY HAD WORKED FOR CONTINENTAL SERVICES IN LAOS ABOUT FOUR YEARS.

"HE CAME FROM HONOLULU, WENT TO HIGH SCHOOL IN HONOLULU AND LEARNED TO FLY IN HONOLULU," THE SPOKESMAN SAID. "HE WAS A CO-PILOT FOR ALOHA AIRLINES FOR ABOUT SEVEN OR EIGHT YEARS AND THEN OPERATED HIS OWN AIR CHARTER SERVICE IN MICRONESIA BEFORE COMING TO US."

CONTINENTAL AIR SERVICES OPERATES FROM HEADQUARTERS IN VIENTIANE, THE SPOKESMAN SAID, USUALLY FLYING MISSIONS UNDER CONTRACT TO THE U.S. AGENCY FOR INTERNATIONAL DEVELOPMENT (AID).

ABOUT 90 OF ITS 500 EMPLOYEES IN LAOS ARE U.S. CITIZENS, AND IT DOES ABOUT \$6 MILLION WORTH OF BUSINESS A YEAR WITH THE U.S. GOVERNMENT, THE SPOKESMAN SAID.

ASKED IF IT DID CONTRACT WORK FOR THE CIA, HE REPLIED: "NO. AIR AMERICA IS THE CIA'S AIRLINE. EVERYBODY IS ALWAYS CONFUSING US WITH THEM.. IT'S A PAIN IN THE NECK."

BUT CONGRESSIONAL INVESTIGATOR RICHARD M. MOOSE, SENT TO LAOS THREE TIMES TO PROBE THE SECRET WAR FOR THE SENATE FOREIGN RELATIONS COMMITTEE, HAS REPORTED THAT CONTINENTAL AIR SERVICES IS ONE OF THREE MAIN CHARTER CARRIERS DOING WORK FOR THE CIA.

MOOSE TOLD UPI IN A TELEPHONE INTERVIEW THAT ALL U.S. GOVERNMENT FLYING CONTRACTS IN LAOS ARE ISSUED THROUGH AID, WHICH THEN BILLS THE AGENCY THAT ACTUALLY USES THE AIRPLANE.

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