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SERIAL=EK1807121091 UDN=Z(21856)

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(VIETNAMESE MEDIA MONITORED BY FBIS HAVE NOT BEEN OBSERVED TO REPORT THE FOLLOWING.)

SRV: FOREIGN MINISTRY SPOKESMAN DENIES HOLDING POW'S *

EK1807121091 HONG KONG AFP IN ENGLISH 1151 GMT 18 JUL 91

TEXT HANOI, JULY 18 AFP -- VIETNAM REAFFIRMED THURSDAY THAT THERE WERE NO U.S. PRISONERS OF WAR (POWS) ALIVE IN VIETNAM. *

THE STATEMENT CAME AFTER THE RELEASE OF A PHOTOGRAPH PURPORTED TO SHOW THREE AMERICAN SERVICEMEN SHOT DOWN OVER INDOCHINA DURING THE VIETNAM WAR. *

"WE HAVE SAID WORD INDISTINCT TIMES THAT THERE ARE NO U.S. PRISONERS ALIVE IN VIETNAM," A FOREIGN MINISTRY SPOKESMAN SAID.

"AS ALWAYS, WE ARE READY TO COOPERATE WITH GROUPS INVESTIGATING THE DISAPPEARANCE OF AMERICANS IN VIETNAM TO VERIFY INFORMATION EVEN IF THAT INFORMATION IS ONLY 0.01 PERCENT TRUE," THE SPOKESMAN SAID. *

(U.S. ADMINISTRATION OFFICIALS WERE BEING SENT TO VIETNAM TO RAISE THE ISSUE, ACCORDING TO THE U.S. EMBASSY IN BANGKOK CITING A WASHINGTON STATEMENT. KENNETH QUINN, DEPUTY ASSISTANT SECRETARY OF STATE FOR EAST ASIAN AND PACIFIC AFFAIRS WAS EXPECTED TO RAISE THE ISSUE IN HANOI ALONG WITH OTHER POW/MIA ISSUES. NO DATES FOR HIS VISIT WERE GIVEN). THE U.S. GOVERNMENT HAS NOT CONFIRMED THE AUTHENTICITY OF THE PHOTOGRAPH, WHICH SHOWS THREE U.S. PILOTS WHO WERE SHOT DOWN OVER LAOS OR NORTH VIETNAM IN 1966, 1969 AND 1970 HOLDING A SIGN DATED APRIL 25, 1990 THAT SAYS "PHOTO LD-25-5-90, NNTN, K.B.C.-19." *

AN OFFICIAL AT THE U.S OFFICE SET UP HERE TWO MONTHS AGO TO INVESTIGATE THE WHEREABOUTS OF THOSE DECLARED MISSING IN ACTION (MIA) DURING THE WAR REFUSED TO COMMENT ON THE PHOTOGRAPH. *

(ACCORDING TO WELL INFORMED SPIRCES IN BANGKOK, THE PHOTOGRAPH TURNED UP IN THE SPRAWLING SITE-2 REFUGEE CAMP ON THAILAND'S BORDER WITH CAMBODIA.

(SITE-2 HOUSES MORE THAN 180,000 REFUGEES LOYAL TO THE KHMER PEOPLE'S NATIONAL LIBERATION FRONT KPNLF , ONE OF TWO NON-COMMUNIST GUERRILLA GROUPS ALLIED TO THE MARXIST BEIJING-BACKED KHMER ROUGE TO FIGHT PHNOM PENH'S VIETNAM-INSTALLED GOVERNMENT.

(THE CAMP ALSO HOUSES A SMALL NUMBER OF REFUGEES FROM VIETNAM, BOTH ETHNIC VIETNAMESE AND ETHNIC CAMBODIANS FROM SOUTHERN VIETNAM.

(ANALYSTS SPECULATED IN BANGKOK THAT THE ABBREVIATION K.B.C. IN THE SIGN HELD BY THE THREE MEN IN THE PHOTOGRAPH COULD STAND FOR "KHU BUU CHINH" OR VIETNAMESE FOR "POSTAL SECTOR."

(BEFORE 1975, THE PHRASE WAS USED FOR MILITARY MAILING ADDRESSES BY THE U.S.-BACKED SOUTH VIETNAMESE FORCES, WHICH WERE DEFEATED THAT YEAR BY HANOI'S COMMUNIST TROOPS. NO ELABORATION COULD BE FOUND FOR THE OTHER ABBREVIATIONS IN THE SIGN.

THE VIETNAMESE SPOKESMAN SAID THAT THE 14TH JOINT SEARCH MISSION FOR MIAS BEGAN WEDNESDAY AND WOULD CONTINUE UNTIL PASSAGE INDISTINCT 20 IN THE PROVINCES OF QUANG NAM-DA NANG, QUANG BINH AND HUE AND AROUND HANOI. SOME 25 U.S. EXPERTS HAVE DIVIDED INTO SEVERAL TEAMS TO SEARCH FOR THE MIAS AND COLLECT INFORMATION, THE *

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SPOKESMAN SAID, ADDING THAT VIETNAM HAS SO FAR RECOVERED THE REMAINS
OF 452 PRESUMED MIAS.
ACCORDING TO THE PENTAGON, 2,273 U.S. SERVICEMEN ARE OFFICIALLY *
MISSING, 1,656 IN VIETNAM, 528 IN LAOS, 83 IN CAMBODIA AND SIX IN *
CHINESE TERRITORIAL WATERS.
JOINT SEARCHES FOR MIAS BEGAN AFTER A VISIT HERE IN AUGUST 1987 *
BY GENERAL JOHN VESSEY, THE PRESIDENTIAL SPECIAL REPRESENTATIVE
CHARGED WITH THE SEARCH FOR MISSING SERVICEMEN.
16 JUL 12447 [redacted]
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