

DEPARTMENT OF DEFENSE  
NATIONAL MILITARY COMMAND CENTER  
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88898

2. (U) DOWNING OF U.S. AIRCRAFT IN LAOS IN DEC 72
3. (U) N/A
4. (U) DEC 72
5. (U) VIENTIANE LAOS; 26 OCT 73
6. (U) C-3

7. [REDACTED]
8. (U) 2 237 8448 73
9. (U) 260CY 73

10. (U) 1
11. (U) DIRM: 683
12. (U) DIA MSG 181955Z OCT 73; O-7CX-49R18  
AM3 SERIES: L7815, ED 2

13. (U) DAD VIENTIANE LAOS
14. (U) J.B. WILSON MAJ MI CH EXPLOITATION TEAM
15. (U) RICHARD G TREFRY BG USA DATT

16. ~~16.~~ TEXT SUMMARY: THIS REPORT PROVIDES LIMITED INFORMATION CONCERNING THE DOWNING OF A U.S. AIRCRAFT IN DEC 72 AND PL HANDLING PROCEDURES GOVERNING U.S. OR OTHER PWS.

A. SOURCE CLAIMED THAT HE HAD STANDING INSTRUCTIONS FROM THE PL CENTRAL MILITARY HEADQUARTERS GOVERNING PRISONERS IN GENERAL AND "FOREIGN" PWS IN PARTICULAR. HAD SOURCE'S BATTALION CAPTURED ANY CREWMEN FROM THE DOWNED U.S. AIRCRAFT IN DEC 72, THEY WOULD HAVE BEEN CLASSIFIED AUTOMATICALLY AS "FOREIGN" PWS. SOURCE WOULD HAVE BEEN PRIMARILY RESPONSIBLE FOR THESE PWS.

HE WOULD HAVE TEMPORARILY DETAINED THEM AND REPORT-ED THAT HE HAD AMERICAN PWS, MAKING THE STANDARD REQUEST FOR DISPOSITION INSTRUCTIONS. HE PRESUMES THAT HE WOULD HAVE BEEN DIRECTED TO MOVE THEM TO THE PROVINCE HQ AS SOON AS POSSIBLE AFTER WHICH PROVINCE WOULD HAVE EVACUATED THEM TO THE REGIONAL HQ. HE PRESUMED THAT PROVINCE HQ WOULD HAVE NOTIFIED THE REGIONAL HQ OF THE PWS OVER THE 15 WATT PROVINCE TO REGION MILITARY RADIO NET. IMMEDIATELY FOLLOWING THEIR CAPTURE, ANY U.S. PWS WOULD HAVE BEEN GIVEN USCH MEDICAL ATTENTION AS THEY REQUIRED AND WAS AVAILABLE. THEY WOULD HAVE BEEN PLACED UNDER ARMED GUARD AND EVEN TIED UP, DEPENDING ON SOURCE'S JUDGEMENT OF THEIR PHYSICAL CONDITION AND THEIR POTENTIAL TO TRY TO ESCAPE. THEY WOULD HAVE BEEN FED STANDARD PL FIELD TYPE RATIONS SUCH AS STICKY RICE AND COOKED VEGETABLES. SOURCE STATED THAT TAKING AMERICAN PWS WAS A SOMEWHAT DIFFICULT THING FOR THE PL BECAUSE OF THE POLITICAL REALITIES OF LIFE IN LAOS. HE STATED THAT GENERALLY THE PL AND LAO CIVILIANS

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IN THE SOUTH LAOS AREA DID NOT MAKE ANY GREAT ATTEMPT TO TRY TO CAPTURE U.S. PERSONNEL FROM DOWNED AIRCRAFT AS OPPOSED TO THE NVA WHO TRIED TO CAPTURE U.S. PERSONNEL IMMEDIATELY. THE LAO ATTITUDE WAS TO GIVE THE SEARCH AND RESCUE PERSONNEL TIME TO PICK UP THE DOWNED PILOTS OR CREW MEMBERS. SOURCE STATED THAT THE PL DID NOT WANT TO TAKE THE PWS BECAUSE IF THE PW SHOULD DIE, EITHER FROM INJURIES OR MALTREATMENT, THE POLITICS OF LAOS BEING WHAT IT WAS MIGHT FIND THE PL OFFICER RESPONSIBLE AND PLACED UNDER INVESTIGATION FOR MALTREATMENT OR WAR CRIMES. THIS CAUSED THE PL CADRE TO BE "SLOW" IN TRYING TO CAPTURE ANY DOWNED U.S. PERSONNEL. SOURCE HAD NO STANDING INSTRUCTIONS REGARDING WHAT THE NVA ADVISORS COULD OR COULD NOT DO WITH PWS CAPTURED BY THE PL UNIT WHICH THEY WERE ADVISING. SINCE THE PWS WOULD HAVE BEEN TAKEN BY THE PL, THEY WERE A PL RESPONSIBILITY UNTIL TURNED OVER TO THE NVA AT MILITARY REGION LEVEL. SOURCE FELT THAT THE NVA WOULD PROBABLY HAVE ASKED TO TALK TO THE PWS TO DETERMINE WHO THE PWS WERE AND WHAT THEIR RANKS WERE BUT DUE TO OBVIOUS LANGUAGE PROBLEMS THE NVA PROBABLY WOULD NOT HAVE LEARNED MUCH. SOURCE BELIEVED THAT THE NVA WOULD HAVE ALLOWED THE PL TO EVACUATE THE PWS ALTHOUGH IT WAS JUST AS POSSIBLE THAT THEY WOULD HAVE REQUESTED THAT THE PWS BE TURNED DIRECTLY OVER TO THEM. IF SO REQUESTED, SOURCE WOULD HAVE REMINDED THEM THAT THE TURN OVER WOULD TAKE PLACE AT REGION LEVEL AND WOULD THEN HAVE EVACUATED THE PWS THROUGH THE PL EVACUATION CHAIN, IT WAS ALL A RATHER SIMPLE MATTER OF THE NVA BEING RESPONSIBLE FOR THOSE PWS THEY CAPTURED AND THE PL RESPONSIBLE FOR THOSE PWS THEY CAPTURED. SOURCE HAD NEVER BEEN IN ANY UNIT WHICH HAD CAPTURED ANY U.S. PERSONNEL.

B. SOURCE REPORTED THE AIRCRAFT DOWNING TO THE PROVINCE HQ BECAUSE THE AIRCRAFT DOWNING TOOK PLACE WITHIN THE IMMEDIATE AREA OF SOURCE'S BN. IN MAKING THE REPORT HE WAS MERELY REPORTING AN INCIDENT WHICH HAD OCCURRED WITHIN HIS AREA OF RESPONSIBILITY. THE ONLY INITIATIVE INVOLVED WAS IN DETERMINING WHAT CONSTITUTED AN INCIDENT, OBVIOUSLY A U.S. AIRCRAFT CRASHING WITHIN THREE KILOMETERS OF ONE'S BN HQ WAS A REPORTABLE INCIDENT. HIS REPORTS DID NOT INCLUDE ANY SPECIFICS OF BURIAL DETAILS. SOURCE WAS NO REPORTING REQUIREMENTS ON KEEPING TRACK OF ANY BURIAL SITE DETAILS AND THERE WAS NO REQUIREMENT TO GIVE ANY ACCURATE AIRCRAFT CRASH SITE LOCATION. IN HIS INCIDENT REPORT HE REFERRED TO THE LOCAL PLACE NAME WOULD HAVE RESULTED IN INSTANT RECOGNITION OF THE SITE LOCATION WITHIN SEVERAL HUNDRED METERS OF THE CRASH SITE. SOURCE HEARD NO REFERENCE TO ANY INTENTION ON THE PART OF THE PL TO ENGAGE IN RECOVERING ANY REMAINS FROM BURIAL SITES. THIS WAS

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EVIDENCED BY THE LACK OF REQUIREMENT FOR ANY PRECISE REPORTING CONCERNING CRASH SITE DETAILS.

C. SOURCE WAS NOT AWARE OF THE SPECIFIC REASONS WHY HTS BN NVA ADVISORS SENT A REPORT CONCERNING THE INCIDENT OTHER THAN FOR THE SAME REASON THAT HE DID, THAT OF AN INCIDENT OF INTEREST OCCURRING WITHIN THE BNS AREA OF RESPONSIBILITY. HE FELT THAT THE NVA ADVISORS REPORT WAS SOLELY ADMINISTRATIVE IN NATURE AND WAS NOT INDICATIVE OF ANY NVA ATTEMPT TO KEEP TRACK OF SUCH DATA.

D. SOURCE RECEIVED NO QUERY FROM PROVINCE HQ EITHER AFTER THE INITIAL OR AFTER THE SECOND REPORT CONCERNING THE AIRCRAFT CRASH. THERE WERE NO QUERIES FROM THE PROVINCE AT ANY TIME SUBSEQUENT TO THE INCIDENT.

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