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RUEHLD/AMEMBASSY LONDON 5021
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RUFHFR/AMEMBASSY PARIS 1574
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RUEHKO/AMEMBASSY TOKYO 2421
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C C R R E C T E D C O P Y (PARAGRAPH 2)

CINCPAC FOR POLAD

E.O. 12356: DECL: OADR
TAGS: OVIP, MOPS, VM, US
SUBJECT: CODEL SOLOMON IN HANOI

1. (C-ENTIRE TEXT)

2. SUMMARY. CODEL SOLOMON VISITED HANOI FEBRUARY 14-15 AND MET WITH DEPUTY FOREIGN MINISTER HOANG BICH SON. A SCHEDULED COURTESY CALL WITH MINISTER OF STATE VO DONG GIANG WAS CANCELLED BY THE DELEGATION WHEN THEY LEARNED THAT FOREIGN MINISTER THACH WOULD NOT BE AVAILAELE. THE CODEL EMPHASIZED THE LIVE SIGHTING ISSUE; SON REPEATED THE CLAIM THAT VIETNAM HAS NO AMERICANS UNDER ITS CONTROL, BUT SUGGESTED THERE MIGHT BE SOME LIVE AMERICANS IT DOESN'T KNOW ABOUT. WHEN ASKED IF AMERICANS COULD JOIN SRV TEAMS INVESTIGATING LIVE SIGHTINGS, SON SAID THIS COULD BE DISCUSSED AT THE TECHNICAL MEETINGS. SON ANNOUNCED TO THE CODEL THAT VIETNAM WOULD SOON TURN OVER ABOUT 14 REMAINS, ALTHOUGH HE WOULD NOT SAY THIS WOULD BE DURING THE UPCOMING FEB. 26-27 TECHNICAL MEETING. THE CODEL RAISED THE ORDERLY DEPARTURE PROGRAM AND URGED THAT TECHNICAL TALKS TAKE PLACE SOON; THE VIETNAMESE SAID THAT THE TALKS WOULD BE HELD IN BANGKOK BY EARLY MARCH. WHEN THE CODEL RAISED POLITICAL PRISONERS, SON SAID THAT THEY COULD NOT BE RELEASED NOW BECAUSE THEY WOULD BE USED TO SUBVERT VIETNAM. THE CODEL INVITED SON AND THACH TO MEET WITH THEM WHEN THE VIETNAMESE ARE NEXT IN NEW YORK; SON ACCEPTED AND SAID HE WOULD INFORM THACH. END SUMMMARY.

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POW/MIA'S

3. CODEL SOLOMON (A LIST OF MEMBERS IS CONTAINED AT THE END OF THIS MESSAGE) ARRIVED IN HANOI AT 1400 ON FEBRUARY 14. THE DELEGATION FIRST MET WITH MFA ACTING DIRECTOR FOR NORTH AMERICAN AFFAIRS NGUYEN CAN TO GO OVER THE SCHEDULE. AT THIS MEETING, THE CODEL LEARNED THAT IT WOULD NOT MEET WITH FOREIGN MINISTER NGUYEN CO THACH, BUT THAT THE HIGHEST LEVEL MEETING WOULD BE WITH MINISTER OF STATE VO DONG GIANG. THE ONLY EXPLANATION OFFERED WAS THAT THACH WAS "OUT OF TOWN" OR "NOT AVAILABLE". (WESTERN JOURNALISTS TOLD THE DELEGATION THAT THEY WERE BRIEFED BEFORE THE CODEL'S ARRIVAL THAT THACH WAS PREVIOUSLY ON THE SCHEDULE.) REP. SOLOMON EXPRESSED GREAT DISAPPOINTMENT THAT THE FOREIGN MINISTER WOULD NOT MEET WITH THE DELEGATION, AND SUGGESTED THAT THE GROUP MIGHT HAVE TO CANCEL THE REST OF THE VISIT. REP. SOLOMON LATER ARRANGED WITH THE SRV DELEGATION LEADER, DEPUTY FOREIGN MINISTER HOANG BICH SON THAT, IN LIGHT OF THACH'S UNAVAILABILITY, THE CODEL WOULD FOREGO THE SCHEDULED COURTESY CALL WITH GIANG AND LEAVE EARLIER THAN ORIGINALLY SCHEDULED 2000 DEPARTURE ON FEBRUARY 15.

4. ON FEBRUARY 15 THE CODEL LEARNED FROM THE BRITISH AND AUSTRALIAN AMBASSADORS THAT FOR SEVERAL DAYS RUMORS HAD BEEN CIRCULATING IN HANOI THAT PARTY GENERAL SECRETARY LE DUAN HAD DIED IN MOSCOW (INCLUDING ONE STORY THAT THE SOVIET EMBASSY HAD FIRST ANNOUNCED, THEN RETRACTED, THIS NEWS). BOTH SPECULATED THAT THACH WAS TIED UP DURING THE CODEL'S VISIT WITH THE ACTUAL OR IMMINENT DEATH OF DUAN.

5. AFTER THE ORGANIZATIONAL MEETING WITH CAN, THE CODEL VISITED THE WELL-KNOWN SITE OF A B-52 CRASH OUTSIDE HANOI AND A HANDICRAFTS FAIR. THEY MET WITH SRV DELEGATION LEADER SON FOR ONE HOUR BEFORE A DINNER HOSTED BY SON. ON FEBRUARY 15 THE CODEL MET FOR BREAKFAST WITH UK AMBASSADOR RICHARD TOLBOYS (HOST) AND THE AUSTRALIAN, ITALIAN AND BELGIAN AMBASSADORS. FOLLOWING BREAKFAST THE CODEL HELD A FORMAL TWO HOUR SESSION WITH SON, CAN AND FOUR OTHER MFA OFFICIALS (NGO HOANG AND DO VAN MINH OF THE NORTH AMERICAN DEPARTMENT, INTERPRETER HA HUY THONH, AND MFA "SPECIALIST" TRAN KIM
END OF MESSAGE
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