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CONTROLLED AMERICAN SOURCE, VIETNAM

14 MARCH 1967

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COUNTRY SOUTH VIETNAM

DOI JUNE TO AUGUST 1966

SUBJECT VIET, CONG POLICY TOWARD AND EXPLOITATION OF  
U.S. PRISONERS OF WAR

ACQ VIETNAM, SAIGON (24 JANUARY 1967)

SOURCE

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Approved for Release  
Date September 1993

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1. (SUMMARY. VIET CONG (VC) POLICY TOWARD PRISONERS OF WAR (POW'S) WHICH DATES BACK TO THE RESISTANCE AGAINST THE FRENCH IS STILL APPLICABLE TO U.S. POW'S. BASICALLY, THE CAPTURING OF THE MAXIMUM NUMBER OF U.S. FORCES IS ENCOURAGED, IN ORDER THAT THEY CAN BE EXPLOITED FOR INTELLIGENCE, PROPAGANDA AND POLITICAL PURPOSES. THIS POLICY HAS NOT ALWAYS BEEN CARRIED OUT, HOWEVER, BECAUSE VC TROOPS WERE NOT AWARE OF IT, BECAUSE THEY SOUGHT TO AVENGE THEIR COMRADES BY KILLING THE ENEMY, BECAUSE OF DIFFICULTIES ENCOUNTERED IN TRANSFERRING PRISONERS TO THE COMMAND POST, AND BECAUSE IT WAS EASIER TO KILL POW'S WHEN THE UNIT HAD TO WITHDRAW UNDER DIFFICULT CIRCUMSTANCES. VC MILITARY REGION (MR) FIVE UNITS HAD TAKEN NO U.S. PRISONERS IN THE LAST TWO YEARS. AS A RESULT, A THREE-PHASE CAMPAIGN WAS INAUGURATED IN EARLY 1966 TO INDOCTRINATE ALL CADRES AND TROOPS IN THE VC POW POLICY, TO DISSEMINATE SLOGANS AND OPERATIONAL PLANS FOR CAPTURING U.S. TROOPS AND TO RECAPITULATE THE SUCCESSES OF THE VARIOUS UNITS IN CAPTURING U.S. FORCES.)

2. VC GENERAL HEADQUARTERS DOCUMENTS WHICH DEALT WITH POLICY TOWARD U.S. POW'S MADE THE FOLLOWING THREE POINTS IN ASSESSING THE POSITION OF U.S. TROOPS IN SOUTH VIETNAM (SVN): (1) WHEN U.S. ECONOMIC AND TECHNICAL ADVISORY AID TO SVN FAILED TO PRODUCE RESULTS, THE U.S. WAS FORCED TO SHOW ITS TRUE COLONIALIST INTENTIONS BY SENDING TROOPS TO SVN AND BOMBING NORTH VIETNAM (NVN), AN ACTION WHICH PROVES THAT THEY ARE AGGRESSORS AND WHICH WILL EARN THEM THE CONDEMNATION OF ALL PROGRESSIVE PEOPLE IN THE WORLD. (2) INCREASED U.S. TROOP STRENGTH PROVIDES MORE OPPORTUNITIES FOR CAPTURING AND KIDNAPPING AMERICAN PERSONNEL AND FOR CARRYING OUT PROPAGANDA EFFORTS AIMED AT ENCOURAGING U.S. FORCES TO DEFEY ORDERS AND TO SUPPORT THE VC REVOLUTIONARY CAUSE, BECAUSE THE U.S. TROOPS, PARTICULARLY OFFICERS, ALTHOUGH WELL TRAINED, ARE AFRAID OF THE HARDSHIPS OF WAR. (3) MOST

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U.S. SERVICEMEN ARE DRAFTEES FROM THE WORKING CLASS WHO HAVE BEEN DECEIVED BY THE U.S. GOVERNMENT INTO THINKING THAT THEY ARE FIGHTING TO DEFEND THE FREE WORLD. THE TASK OF THE VC IS TO TAKE ADVANTAGE OF THE FACT THAT THE U.S. FORCES ARE FAR FROM HOME AND ENGAGED IN A DIFFICULT GUERRILLA WAR, BY WINNING THEM OVER, EVEN THOUGH THEY ARE NOT CAPTIVES, BY MAKING THEM AWARE OF THE TRUE NATURE OF THEIR MISSION IN VIETNAM, THEREBY SOWING DISSENT IN THEIR RANKS.

3. THERE IS A THREEFOLD PURPOSE IN TAKING U.S. PRISONERS: THEY CAN BE EXPLOITED FOR INTELLIGENCE PURPOSES; THEY CAN BE EXPLOITED FOR PROPAGANDA AND COUNTER-PROPAGANDA PURPOSES THROUGH RADIO BROADCASTS AND INTERVIEWS PUBLISHED IN THE NEUTRALIST AND PRO-COMMUNIST PRESS; THEY CAN BE USED POLITICALLY TO FURTHER THE CAUSE OF COMMUNISM BEYOND THE LIMITED CONTEXT OF VIETNAM BY PROPAGANDIZING THEM, BRAIN WASHING THEM, AND CONVERTING THEM INTO COMMUNIST OR PRO-COMMUNIST CADRES WHO WILL WORK ACTIVELY FOR THE PARTY IN THEIR OWN COUNTRY AFTER THEY HAVE BEEN RELEASED.

THE VC ALSO WANT TO TAKE A LARGE NUMBER OF CAPTIVES IN ORDER TO BE ABLE TO CALL FOR AN EXCHANGE OF POW'S. DURING THE PAST TWO YEARS, HOWEVER, MR FIVE HAS CAPTURED NO U.S. MILITARY PERSONNEL IN SPITE OF NUMEROUS ENGAGEMENTS. THEREFORE DURING AN MR FIVE CELEBRATION HELD IN EARLY 1966 IN THE JUNGLE AREA OF SON HA DISTRICT, QUANG NGAI PROVINCE, FIELD GRADE POLITICAL OFFICER MAJOR GENERAL CHU HUY MAN AND DEPUTY FIELD GRADE POLITICAL OFFICER SENIOR COLONEL TRINH CALLED ON ALL UNITS TO MAKE A THOROUGH STUDY OF PARTY AND NVN GOVERNMENT POLICY ON POW'S AND <sup>TO</sup> EXECUTE IT CORRECTLY. FAILURE TO DO SO WOULD RESULT IN SEVERE PUNISHMENT. COLONEL TRINH THEN INAUGURATED A THREE-PHASE CAMPAIGN BY PRESENTING A TYPICAL VC UNIT WITH A "SYMBOLIC" ROPE FOR TYING UP PRISONERS.

5. THE FIRST PHASE OF THE CAMPAIGN CONSISTED OF AN INTENSIVE INDOCTRINATION OF ALL CADRES AND TROOPS ON THE POW

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POLICY WHICH HAD BEEN IN EFFECT SINCE THE TIME OF THE RESISTANCE AGAINST THE FRENCH, BUT WHICH HAD NOT ALWAYS BEEN CARRIED OUT EFFECTIVELY. THIS PHASE, WHICH LASTED THREE MONTHS, FROM MARCH THROUGH MAY, WAS FIRST ORGANIZED BY THE PARTY COMMITTEES AT DIVISION, REGIMENT, AND BATTALION LEVELS AND THEN NON-PARTY MEMBERS. THE ADVANTAGES OF TAKING LIVE PRISONERS WAS STRESSED, AND THE FOLLOWING REASONS WERE GIVEN FOR VC CADRES AND SOLDIERS FAILURE TO DO SO IN THE PAST: THE VC WERE NOT AWARE OF THE IMPORTANCE OF TAKING POW'S. THEY WANTED TO AVENGE THEIR CAMRADES BY SLAUGHTERING THE ENEMY, THERE WERE DIFFICULTIES AND HARDSHIPS INVOLVED IN TRANSFERRING PRISONERS FROM THE UNIT TO THE COMMAND POST, AND WHEN A UNIT WAS SURROUNDED OR HAD SUFFERED MANY CASUALTIES PRISONERS WERE KILLED TO MAKE WITHDRAWAL EASIER.

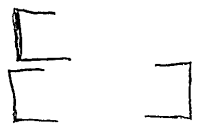
6. THE SECOND PHASE OF THE CAMPAIGN, WHICH STARTED IN JUNE 1966 AND WAS SCHEDULED TO CONTINUE THROUGH JANUARY 1967, WAS ENTITLED "EMULATION FOR CAPTURING AMERICANS". SLOGANS SUCH AS "A LIVE POW IS EQUAL TO TEN DEAD AMERICAN AGGRESSORS" WERE DISSEMINATED AND OPERATIONAL PLANS BASED ON THESE SLOGANS WERE FORMULATED. ALL SOLDIERS AND CADRES HAD TO OBTAIN ROPES, AND PRIOR TO AN OPERATION THE LEADERS CHECKED TO MAKE SURE THE TROOPS HAD THEM. THOSE WHO DID NOT HAVE ROPES WERE SEVERELY PUNISHED. THE VC WERE ORDERED TO ENGAGE IN CLOSE COMBAT IN ORDER TO TAKE U.S. PRISONERS. THEY WERE ALSO ORDERED TO TREAT U.S. POW'S WELL, TO GIVE THEM ENOUGH TO EAT, TO BEHAVE POLITELY, AND TO ATTEMPT TO PROPAGANDIZE THEM. POW'S WERE TO BE TRANSFERRED TO THE COMMAND POST AS SOON AS POSSIBLE DESPITE THE DIFFICULTIES INVOLVED, EVEN IF THE PRISONER HAD TO BE CARRIED. UPON WITHDRAWING WHEN SURROUNDED BY THE ENEMY, POW'S, WOUNDED, AND DEAD SHOULD BE EVACUATED FIRST, THEN WEAPONS AND FINALLY THE UNIT.

THE THIRD PHASE, WHICH WAS SCHEDULED TO BE HELD IN EARLY 1967, WAS TO BE A RECAPITULATION OF SUCCESSES AND CELEBRATIONS WERE TO BE HELD TO CONGRATULATE AND REWARD OUTSTANDING UNITS.

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8. FIELD DISSEM STATE USAID JUSPAO USMACV USARV NAVFORV 1.3(a)(4)

7TH AIR FORCE DIST 50/OSI 525TH MIG CINCPAC ANPAC PACAF PACFLT.



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