

# Intelligence Information Report



[REDACTED]

C-O-N-F-I-D-E-N-T-I-A-L

COUNTRY North Vietnam/Laos

SUBJECT Visit with Ngoyem Van Thanh, First Secretary, DRV Embassy, Vientiane, Laos/ Reaction to Bob Hope's Appeal for Release of US POW's/Thanh's Personal Characteristics

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DATE OF INFO. January 1972

THIS IS UNEVALUATED INFORMATION

1. In early January 1972, two [REDACTED] were driving past the North Vietnam Embassy in Vientiane when, suddenly, they decided to drive in the gate of the courtyard. As they entered, they were met by an unarmed sentry who stepped out of a 20 foot by 20 foot shed-like gatehouse. One [REDACTED] who spoke Laotian, told the sentry that a visiting [REDACTED] would like to talk to the Ambassador. The sentry took the [REDACTED] name, went into the embassy, and returned in about five minutes. He said that the First Secretary would see them. The First Secretary, Ngoyem Van Thanh, is the official who spoke to Bob Hope when he visited the embassy in December 1971.
2. The First Secretary invited the visitors to a room in which he said he had had his meeting with "Meester" Hope (as he pronounced it). In about a minute, a servant appeared from behind a large drape and served tea, and the Secretary offered the visitors cigarettes. After [REDACTED] assured his host that his purpose in stopping was just that of a tourist, he asked if Thanh would care to give his impression of the meeting with Bob Hope. Thanh answered by asking the US visitor where he was from and what countries he had visited before coming to Laos. When [REDACTED] asked what were the prospects for peace, Thanh replied that that was entirely up to President Nixon--all he had to do was accept the seven-point peace plan of the Democratic Republic of Vietnam (DRV). Thanh also said that Hope was denied a visa to the DRV because, due to US bombing, the time was not propitious. The First Secretary said that Hope's proposal for releasing US prisoners of war would have created the impression that humans were being sold for money and that the North Vietnamese had a much higher regard for human beings than just selling them for money, as in a business transaction.
3. Thanh was asked why the religious leaders of the US, who represented the US bishops, were denied entry to the DRV. He replied that the DRV religious leader in charge of greeting foreign religious dignitaries was out of the country at that time and, therefore, was not available to meet with the US bishops.

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4. The visit with the DRV First Secretary lasted about 30 minutes. Thanh was neatly attired, very polite, always had a big smile on his face, spoke fair English, and was very deliberate in his speech. He mentioned that, when Hope visited the embassy, the interpreter was an obstacle rather than a help. Thanh added that his own poor English was more than adequate to communicate with Hope. Although Thanh had a warm handshake and a friendly personality, he is very shrewd and gives the impression that he could make diplomatic mincemeat of the unwary do-gooder.

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