

## MEMORANDUM

TO : For the Record

FROM : PM-VTE

SUBJECT : The six Air America Employees believed interned by hostile forces

DATE : October 26, 1970

REF. No. PO-VTE-70-1449

On the morning of 23 October 1970 the undersigned met with the US Embassy Political Officer, Mr. Ed Kelly, and discussed the six Air America employees believed held incountry by hostile forces.

We briefly discussed the historical events and futile attempts to obtain information regarding their whereabouts and condition.

A recap of each of the new action ideas or avenues which I suggested to him follow:

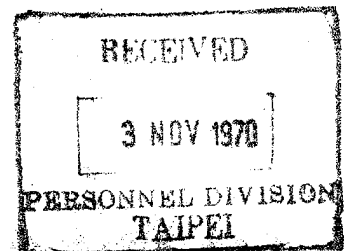
1. The North Vietnamese Red Cross team is presently in Bangkok discussing the repatriation of several thousands of Vietnamese refugees. I opined that it may be possible for our company people, or the respective Government Officials, or International Red Cross, to make contact with the North Vietnamese team and discuss the possibilities of their accepting packages, letters or just a trade of information. Mr. Kelly advised against such action explaining that (A) the NVA have never recognized their presence in Laos and (B) the US Government is extremely reluctant to have any "outsiders" involved in these initial, politically significant discussions.

He advised there have been wives groups who have contacted the NVA Red Cross team only to have the door slammed in their faces. He also recommended against attempting to contact the team, as it passed through Vientiane to Hanoi, directly or indirectly; as had been one of the plans we could have possibly set up through the Lao Red Cross President Mr. Ouom Souvannavong. (Mr. Rosales has contacted Mr. Ouom Souvannavong and has arranged an interview with me for the near future).

Mr. Kelly suggested we concentrate our efforts directly to the rather Lao rather than going through the North Vietnamese.

2. He was very "intrigued" and receptive to the suggestion that we enlist the aid of the local Vientiane Embassies which represent the nationalities of the other interned employees. As far as can be determined no one has ever thought of that particular approach to the problem. This, I suggested may be a type of "Low Keyed" avenue that would keep the "bad American guys" out of the picture. Apparently the main emphasis in the past has been regarding DESROIN. He (Kelly) will check with his Supervisors in regards to this matter and advise as how the initial approach to the local British, Philippine and Thailand Embassies would best be handled - on a diplomatic request level, or Air America contact level. He promised to get back to me ASAP.

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3. He will also check out and advise the feasibility in attempting to establish contact with the Pathet Lao Political leader - Prince Souphannouvong, directly through a potential contact, who as the editor of the local newspaper travels freely through PL country interviewing the PL leaders. It is felt this individual could be approached and receptive due to his longtime personal acquaintance with one of our Lao employees.

I have advised Mr. Kelly that it is my desire to intensify the search for information about our employees. Recently the Pathet Lao headquarters in VTL has received some "wives" of US pilots shot down over Laos and have treated them cordially. (That is, compared to past contact.) Perhaps this may indicate some sort of change in their political philosophy which if we're persistent, will lead to the gaining of some information.

It is my intent to write "for the record" memos about everything I do in this regard as our files here are terribly void regarding the How's and Why's of past events. If I ever leave VTL want to at least leave a proper record of efforts in this area.



John E. Baird

cc: Eugene H. Debrun P/File  
Prasit Promisuwan "  
Prasidhi Traneed "  
Ampol Chan-Aium "  
Yik Chiu To "  
Ceferino Bautista Nabong P/File  
→ CEC via DP, WPA, President via BMMK  
DSY  
E. Kelly, US Embassy VTL  
Missing Persons File  
R/File

H-copied MCDR  
VPL

Nov. 2, 68