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TAGS: CVIS, AU (BONFERT, HELMUT)  
SUBJECT: POSSIBLE 212(A)(33) INELIGIBILITY  
  
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1. HELMUT BONFERT  
JANUARY 4, 1924  
CLUJ, ROMANIA  
DRAFTSMAN
  
2. INTRODUCTION AND SUMMARY: BONFERT ORIGINALLY APPLIED  
FOR A VISA TO VISIT THE U.S. IN MARCH 1986. AVLOS WAS  
POSITIVE AND BONFERT WAS INTERVIEWED TO ASSIST IN  
DETERMINING WHETHER HE IS INELIGIBLE UNDER SECTION  
212(A)(33), WITH POST RECOMMENDING IN MAY 1986 THAT  
BONFERT BE FOUND NOT INELIGIBLE (REF A). DEPARTMENT  
RESPONDED IN MARCH 1987 (REF B), REQUESTING FURTHER  
INFORMATION FROM POST AND FROM BDC. UTILIZING BDC  
REPORTS (REFS C AND D), CONOFF INTERVIEWED BONFERT AND

NAZI WAR CRIMES DISCLOSURE ACT  
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CAREFULLY EXAMINED HIM ON HIS WARTIME RECORD. BONFERT APPEARED TO BE CANDID AND FORTHRIGHT IN THE INTERVIEW, MAKING AN EFFORT TO RECONSTRUCT HIS PAST ACTIVITIES FOR US IN AS MUCH DETAIL AS POSSIBLE. HE WAS A FRONTLINE SOLDIER ASSIGNED TO COMBAT UNITS OF WAFFEN-SS DIVISIONS AND WAS WOUNDED THREE TIMES IN ACTION ON THE EASTERN FRONT. BONFERT DENIES ANY INVOLVEMENT IN ATROCITIES AGAINST SOVIET PRISONERS OR SHOOTINGS OF JEWS AND HIS UNITS WERE NOT ENGAGED IN ANTI-PARTISAN ACTIVITY AT THE TIMES OF HIS SERVICE WITH THEM. IT IS IMPOSSIBLE, BASED ON INFORMATION HERE, TO CHECK WHETHER BONFERT WAS INVOLVED IN MASSACRES OF RUSSIAN PRISONERS. WE HAVE SOUGHT TO DETERMINE THE PRECISE PERIODS OF HIS SERVICE WITH SPECIFIC UNITS IN ORDER TO ASSIST AN EFFORT TO CORRELATE THIS DATA WITH KNOWN INCIDENTS. WE HAVE ALSO COMPARED HIS INFORMATION WITH THE SPECIFIC EXCESSES MENTIONED IN REF B. GIVEN BONFERT'S GENERAL CREDIBILITY ON MATTERS WE DO KNOW ABOUT AND CERTAIN DETAILS ABOUT HIS SERVICE, WE RECOMMEND A FINDING THAT BONFERT IS NOT/NOT INELIGIBLE UNLESS WASHINGTON CAN CORRELATE HIS PARTICULAR SUB-UNIT WITH A PARTICULAR ACT OF PERSECUTION.

3. THOUGH NOT RELATED TO THIS PARTICULAR CASE, WE TAKE THIS OPPORTUNITY TO NOTE, FOR WASHINGTON'S INFORMATION, AN EMERGING PATTERN IN OUR 212(A)(33) CASES. FOR EVERY VISA APPLICANT THAT WE INTERVIEW ON THIS GROUND OF INELIGIBILITY, THERE ARE TWO OR THREE APPLICANTS WHO IMMEDIATELY WITHDRAW THEIR VISA APPLICATIONS WHEN INFORMED (AFTER AVLOS COMES BACK POSITIVE) THAT THEY WILL NEED TO BE INTERVIEWED ABOUT THEIR PAST RECORD. WE BELIEVE THAT MANY OF THESE WITHDRAWALS ARE MADE BY APPLICANTS WHO ARE CONSCIOUS OF 'PROBLEMS' IN THEIR PAST. WE HAVE NEVER, FOR EXAMPLE, SEEN A FORMER MEMBER OF THE SD, THE REICH SECURITY MAIN OFFICE (RSHA), OR VARIOUS OTHER ESPECIALLY SUSPECT NAZI OR SS ORGANIZATIONS OR UNITS. GIVEN THIS PATTERN AND BECAUSE OF THE SOURCE OF MOST AVLOS ENTRIES, WE TEND TO SEE ONLY WAFFEN-SS VETERANS AND, WITHIN THIS GROUP, THOSE WITH RECORDS THAT ARE RELATIVELY 'CLEAN' WITH RESPECT TO ACTIVITIES DEFINED IN SECTION 212(A)(33) (ALTHOUGH SOME OF THESE HAVE BEEN RECOMMENDED AND FOUND TO BE INELIGIBLE). END INTRODUCTION AND SUMMARY.

//PREWAR ACTIVITIES//

4. AS DISCUSSED IN REF A, BONFERT DESCRIBED HIS HAVING JOINED THE HITLER YOUTH AT THE TIME OF THE MARCH 1938 GERMAN ANNEXATION OF AUSTRIA. HE WAS THEN FOURTEEN YEARS OLD. IN HIS CURRENT INTERVIEW BONFERT WAS ASKED ABOUT ANY INVOLVEMENT IN THE NOVEMBER 1938 "KRISTALLNACHT" ASSAULTS ON JEWS AND THEIR PROPERTY IN VIENNA. BONFERT WAS LIVING IN VIENNA AND SAID HE RECALLED THE EVENT. HE WAS STILL IN SCHOOL AND, DUE TO THE ACTIVITY IN THE STREETS, HIS PARENTS KEPT HIM AT HOME WHEN SCHOOL LET OUT. BONFERT REMAINED IN THE HITLER YOUTH UNTIL HE JOINED THE WAFFEN-SS IN 1941.

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//WARTIME ACTIVITIES 1941-1943//

5. IN MARCH 1941, AT THE AGE OF SEVENTEEN, BONFERT ENLISTED IN THE WAFFEN-SS. AFTER BASIC TRAINING, HE WAS ASSIGNED IN JULY 1941 AS A PRIVATE TO THE FOURTH UNCLAS SECTION 02 OF 03 VIENNA 07015

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SUBJECT: POSSIBLE 212(A)(33) INELIGIBILITY

BATTALION OF THE SS PANZER BRIGADE (LATER THE 1ST SS-PANZER DIVISION) "LEIBSTANDARTE ADOLF HITLER," THEN ALREADY ENGAGED IN FIGHTING IN THE SOVIET UNION AS PART OF THE 1ST PANZER GROUP (VON KLEIST) UNDER ARMY GROUP SOUTH. (REF A CONFUSED THE BRIGADE WITH THE LATER DIVISION AND THE 12TH PANZER GRENADIER REPLACEMENT BATTALION WITH BONFERT'S ACTUAL OPERATIONAL BATTALION.) BONFERT WAS WOUNDED IN ACTION NEAR UMAN, IN THE UKRAINE, ON AUGUST 8, 1941. COMMENT: FROM MID-JULY TO EARLY AUGUST THE SS-LAH BRIGADE, AS THE MOST FULLY MOTORIZED FORMATION IN THE ARMY GROUP, WAS IN THE VANGUARD OF A MAJOR GERMAN ENCIRCLEMENT OF RUSSIAN FORCES COMPLETED NEAR UMAN. END COMMENT. BONFERT SAID HE WAS EVACUATED ALONG WITH TWO WOUNDED SOVIET PRISONERS TO THE BATTALION AID STATION, THEN (SEPARATELY) TO A MILITARY HOSPITAL IN THE TOWN OF CRACOW IN WESTERN POLAND (ON THIS HOSPITALIZATION, REF A CONFUSED CRACOW WITH DACHAU.) ASKED LATER ABOUT WHETHER HE WITNESSED ANY CONCENTRATION, DEPORTATION, OR EXECUTION OF JEWS, BONFERT SAID THAT THE CLOSEST HE CAME TO SUCH A THING WAS WHILE HE WAS IN THIS HOSPITAL, WHICH HE SAID WAS ONLY 200 TO 300 METERS FROM THE JEWISH GHETTO, ALTHOUGH HE SAID HE WITNESSED NO DEPORTATIONS OR EXECUTIONS.

6. AFTER BEING TREATED FOR THIS WOUND, BONFERT WAS RETURNED TO HIS UNIT AT THE END OF OCTOBER 1941, PASSING THROUGH THE ALREADY OCCUPIED TOWN OF TAGANROG AND REJOINING THE BRIGADE FOR THE ASSAULT ON ROSTOV ON THE DON. HE WAS ASSIGNED AT THIS TIME TO THE 1ST COMPANY OF THE 1ST BATTALION OF THE BRIGADE (LATER PART OF THE 1ST PANZER REGIMENT WHEN THE BRIGADE WAS CONVERTED TO A DIVISION IN 1942). TOWARD THE END OF THE HEAVY FIGHTING IN FRONT OF ROSTOV FROM MID-NOVEMBER TO THE BEGINNING OF DECEMBER 1941 BONFERT WAS WOUNDED AGAIN, THIS TIME MORE SERIOUSLY, AND AGAIN SENT BACK TO HOSPITAL, THIS TIME IN GERMANY AT THE SS GARRISON HOSPITAL IN DACHAU. COMMENT: BDC REPORT ON HOSPITAL RECORDS (REF D) CAN BE READ TO IMPLY, WE THINK SLIGHTLY INACCURATELY, THAT BONFERT WAS TRANSFERRED FROM THE CRACOW HOSPITAL DIRECTLY TO DACHAU, MISSING THE INTERVENING SERVICE AND SECOND WOUND (WHICH WE DO NOT THINK BONFERT INVENTED). ALSO, DEPARTMENT IN

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REF B SAID THAT BONFERT "APPEARS TO HAVE BEEN PRESENT AT TAGANROG IN MID-1941" WHEN THE SS-LAH BRIGADE SHOT 4,000 RUSSIAN PRISONERS. THE DATE MENTIONED FOR THIS ATROCITY, "MID-1941," IS NOT HELPFUL SINCE TAGANROG WAS NOT EVEN ATTACKED BY GERMAN FORCES UNTIL MID-OCTOBER 1941. WE CANNOT DETERMINE WHETHER BONFERT, IN TRANSIT BACK TO HIS UNIT, WAS IN TAGANROG WHEN THIS MASSACRE OCCURRED. HE STATED THAT, WHEN HE PASSED THROUGH, TAGANROG HAD ALREADY BEEN OCCUPIED FOR SOME PERIOD OF TIME. WE BELIEVE HE PROBABLY TRANSITED THE CITY SOMETIME AROUND THE VERY END OF OCTOBER. END COMMENT. ASKED GENERALLY ABOUT EXECUTIONS OF RUSSIAN PRISONERS AND SPECIFICALLY ABOUT REPRISAL SHOOTINGS OR IMPLEMENTATION OF THE 'COMMISSAR ORDER,' BONFERT SAID THAT HE DID NOT KNOW ABOUT SUCH ACTIONS AND THAT HIS COMPANY WAS NOT INVOLVED IN DEALING WITH PRISONERS, SINCE THEY IMMEDIATELY PASSED CAPTIVES ON BACK TO BATTALION AND REGIMENT.

7. BONFERT STAYED AT THE HOSPITAL IN DACHAU UNTIL JANUARY 1942, WHEN HE WAS TRANSFERRED TO A CONVALESCENT HOME AT BAYRISCHZELL. HE SAID HE WAS NOT GIVEN GUARD DUTY AT THE DACHAU CONCENTRATION CAMP. LATER IN 1942 BONFERT RETURNED TO HIS UNIT, SERVING WITH THE SAME COMPANY. IN LATE 1942 THE DIVISION WAS MOVED TO FRANCE, NEAR CAEN IN NORMANDY, TO BE BROUGHT BACK UP TO FULL STRENGTH AND REEQUIPPED. IN LATE JANUARY/EARLY FEBRUARY 1943 THE DIVISION WAS SENT HURRIEDLY BACK TO THE EASTERN FRONT AND THROWN INTO ACTION AGAINST THE SOVIET OFFENSIVES WHICH FOLLOWED THE GERMAN DEFEAT AT STALINGRAD. THE SS-LAH DIVISION WAS INITIALLY DRIVEN BACK AND FORCED TO RETREAT FROM KHARKOV, AND BONFERT WAS WOUNDED A THIRD TIME. COMMENT: REF B STATED THAT BONFERT ALSO APPEARED TO HAVE BEEN PRESENT "AT KHARKOV IN EARLY 1943 AT THE TIME OF THE LSSAH MASSACRE OF 200 HOSPITALIZED PRISONERS AND BURNING OF THE HOSPITAL." AGAIN, THE SPECIFIC DATE OF THIS ATROCITY COULD BE IMPORTANT. THE SS-LAH DIVISION WAS IN KHARKOV TWICE IN FEBRUARY 1943, ONCE IN RETREATING FROM THE CITY (CAPTURED UNCLAS SECTION 03 OF 03 VIENNA 07015

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BY SOVIETS ON FEBRUARY 16) AND A SECOND TIME IN LEADING A COUNTERATTACK WHICH RECAPTURED THE CITY TOWARD THE END OF THE MONTH. BONFERT WAS CLEAR ABOUT BEING PUT OUT OF ACTION WHILE THE DIVISION WAS RETREATING, IN EARLY TO MID-FEBRUARY. HE INDICATED NO KNOWLEDGE OF THE INCIDENT DESCRIBED IN REF B. END COMMENT.

//WARTIME ACTIVITIES 1943-1945//

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8. AFTER RECOVERING FROM THIS WOUND, BONFERT WAS TRANSFERRED TO THE NEWLY FORMED 12TH SS-PANZER DIVISION "HITLER JUGEND." AS DESCRIBED IN REF A, HE SERVED IN THIS DIVISION IN TRAINING AT BERLIN AND IN BELGIUM UNTIL THE END OF 1943. HE THEN BEGAN RECEIVING TRAINING AS AN SS OFFICER-CANDIDATE, FIRST IN THE NETHERLANDS, THEN AT THE SS JUNKERSCHULE IN KLAGENFURT, AUSTRIA, THEN IN ADVANCED PANZER-GRENADIER TRAINING, UNTIL DECEMBER 1944. IN DECEMBER BONFERT (THEN TWENTY EARS OLD) WAS COMMISSIONED AS AN SS-UNTERSTURMFUEHRER (SECOND LIEUTENANT).

9. IN JANUARY 1945 BONFERT WAS ASSIGNED AS THE AIDE TO SS-STURMBANNFUEHRER (MAJOR) SEPP SCHMIDT ON THE STAFF OF THE SS NCO SCHOOL AT LAIBACH IN YUGOSLAVIA (CONFIRMED BY REF D). SCHMIDT COMMANDED ONE OF THE TRAINING BATTALIONS. IN FEBRUARY LAIBACH WAS BOMBED AND THE SCHOOL FACILITIES WERE BADLY DAMAGED, SO THE SCHOOL WAS MOVED FROM PLACE TO PLACE UNTIL, AT THE END OF MARCH, IT WAS DISSOLVED ALTOGETHER. BONFERT THEN REJOINED FRAGMENTS OF THE SS-LAH DIVISION IN LOWER AUSTRIA AND WAS TAKEN PRISONER BY AMERICAN TROOPS IN MAY 1945. HE WAS RELEASED FROM POW CAMP IN MAY 1947, WITH HIS RELEASE CERTIFICATE NOTING HIS WAFFEN-SS RANK AND HIS VARIOUS WOUND SCARS. RELEASED IN AUSTRIA, HE HAS NO DENAZIFICATION HEARING RECORD.

//CONCLUSION//

10. BONFERT APPEARED TO BE CANDID AND FORTHRIGHT IN HIS INTERVIEW AND HIS DESCRIPTIONS OF HIS PAST RECORD WERE CONSISTENT WITH BDC RECORDS. THERE IS NO EVIDENCE AVAILABLE TO US TO INDICATE HIS INVOLVEMENT IN ACTS SUFFICIENT TO INDICATE INELIGIBILITY UNDER 212(A)(33) AND WE RECOMMEND A FINDING THAT HE IS NOT/NOT INELIGIBLE. WE ARE, OF COURSE, AWARE THAT CERTAIN SS COMBAT UNITS WERE INVOLVED IN NUMEROUS ATROCITIES, INCLUDING EXECUTIONS OF PRISONERS. HOWEVER, WE ARE UNABLE TO LINK BONFERT OR HIS SUB-UNIT WITH SUCH ACTIONS. WE THEREFORE HAVE DETAILED, AS SPECIFICALLY AS POSSIBLE, BONFERT'S UNITS AND TIMES AND PLACES OF SERVICE, SO THAT ADDRESSEES CAN BETTER EXAMINE THIS QUESTION. GIVEN BONFERT'S APPARENT CREDIBILITY IN INTERVIEWS AND DENIALS OF INVOLVEMENT, WE ARE NOT PREPARED, AT THIS STAGE, TO RESOLVE ANY UNCERTAINTIES AGAINST HIM. LAUDER

ADMIN  
END OF MESSAGE

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