

M E M O R A N D U M

To: FAZ

From: Sedgwick D. Tourison, Jr.

Date: July 22, 1992

Subject: Vietnamese reports about U.S. POWs not previously known by the Defense Department.

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My review of JCRC casualty files has surfaced several messages which list a total of nine American servicemen Vietnam has acknowledged were captured alive, all of whom are listed by DoD as having been declared dead while missing. None are officially listed as ever having been a POW. This information has come from Vietnamese officials a piece at a time over the past two years. I suspect we will learn about more such cases as time goes on. While the precise fate of the nine is not clear, it appears likely they died in captivity in southern Vietnam and this is the first admission from Vietnam that these nine were captured alive. None was listed as having died in captivity at Operation Homecoming.

From my perspective, DIA/JTF/General Vessey had an ample opportunity during the hearings on 24-25 June to discuss these revelations and they did not. While the reasons for their avoiding the subject are unclear, two obvious explanation could be that (a) it would be irresponsible to discuss such information prior to investigating it fully, (b) they do not want to publically discuss active cases still under investigation, and (c) they may not believe Vietnamese assertions.

A fourth explanation is that the Administration is too embarrassed at this point to even want to have this information be made public. After all, it must be clear to the Administration that the Vessey/DOD-ISA "lists" have led to a relatively inflexible investigation schedule which is being directly controlled from Washington and with little seeming flexibility on the part of those on the ground to react to changing conditions. This is a direct repeat of the criticism levied at DoD/JCS/White House in its inept prosecution of the war two plus decades ago and it is evident that Viet Nam is well aware of these modalities and these new "POW" reports could well represent Viet Nam's own effort to tie up the Administration.

Attached is a list of those individuals I have been able to identify. I have not had the time to review their individual case files.

Fred T. Schreckengost/Robert L. Greer (Case 0031)

Both individuals were declared missing on June 7, 1964. Schreckengost was declared killed in action while missing, body not recovered, in August 1974. During the recovery of their remains in 1990 Vietnamese officials acknowledged they had been captured alive and killed in captivity. The U.S. Marine Corps still does not list them as having died in captivity but to have died while in an MIA status.

Donald S. Newton (Case 0258)

Sergeant Newton and PFC Francis D. Wills were both declared missing on February 6, 1966 while on patrol. Sergeant Newton was declared to have been killed in action while missing, body not recovered, in August 1974. Vietnam has now acknowledged that Sergeant Newton was captured alive and was taken to Hospital 102 of Military Region 5. His eventual fate has not yet been determined.

Carlos Ashlock (Case 0678)

Corporal Ashlock was reported missing on May 12, 1967 and in September 1976 declared to have been killed in action while missing, body not recovered. Vietnam has now acknowledged that Corporal Ashlock was captured alive in Quang Ngai Province. His eventual fate has not yet been determined.

Madison A. Strohlein (Case 1756)

Sergeant Strohlein was reported missing on June 22, 1971 and in October 1974 declared him to have been killed in action while missing, body not recovered. Vietnam has now acknowledged that Sergeant Strohlein was captured alive on June 22, 1971 in Quang Nam Province. His eventual fate has not yet been determined.

James T. Egan, Jr. (Case 0235)

First Lieutenant Egan was reported missing on January 21, 1966 and in March 1978 was declared to have been killed in action while missing, body not recovered. Vietnam has now acknowledged that Lieutenant Egan was captured alive and has reported that he died in captivity in December 1968.

Roger D. Hamilton (0647)

Lance Corporal Hamilton was reported missing on April 21, 1967 and in April 1978 was declared to have been killed in action while missing, body not recovered. Vietnam has now acknowledged that Lance Corporal Hamilton was captured alive in Military Region 5. His eventual fate has not yet been determined.

Gregory J. Harris (0358)

Corporal Harris was reported missing on June 12, 1966 and in March 1980 was declared to have been killed in action, body not recovered. Vietnam has now acknowledged that Corporal Harris was captured alive. His eventual fate has not yet been determined.

Robert L. Platt, Jr. (0728)

Private First Class Platt was reported missing on June 10, 1967 and in March 1978 was declared to have been killed in action, body not recovered. Vietnam has now acknowledged that Private First Class Platt was captured alive on June 10, 1967. His eventual fate has not yet been determined.