

CHE 1001B-2157 0:00:00-73

COUNTRY LAOS/NORTH VIETNAM

ON MARCH 1972

SUBJECT: CAPTURE OF U.S. AIR FORCE PILOT NEAR BAN-FOUMLAN, SARAVANE PROVINCE, AND SUBSEQUENT DEATH OF THE PILOT

CG (12 JANUARY 1973)

SOURCE

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When Filled in)

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1. IN MARCH 1972 [REDACTED] NEAR BAN HOUAY LAY, WHICH IS ABOUT 500 METERS NORTH OF NORTH VIETNAMESE ARMY(NVA) ROUTE 25B AND ABOUT 10 KILOMETERS(KMS) EAST OF BAN TOUMLAN(XC 3268), NVA [REDACTED] SAW A LOW FLYING U.S. OV-10 AIRCRAFT SHOT DOWN BY 37MM ANTIAIRCRAFT ARTILLERY(AAA) FIRE. THE PLANE HAD MADE ONE PASS OVER THE AREA OF BAN HOUAY LAY, AND ON THE SECOND PASS THREE 37MM AAA GUNS WHICH WERE POSITIONED WITHIN A RADIUS OF TWO KMS OF THE VILLAGE FIRED AND HIT THE AIRCRAFT. THE PILOT, SUCCESSFULLY PARACHUTED FROM THE AIRCRAFT, BUT WHILE HE WAS DESCENDING THE 37MM AAA GUNNERS CONTINUED TO FIRE AT HIM. FOUR ROUNDS PASSED THROUGH HIS PARACHUTE MAKING HOLES IN THE CANOPY BUT NOT DETONATING. [REDACTED] COMMENT: [REDACTED] SAID THAT FOUR OR FIVE DAYS PREVIOUS TO THIS ACTION U.S. AIRCRAFT HAD DESTROYED 16 TRUCKS IN THE AREA AND THAT BECAUSE OF THE HEAVY DESTRUCTION CAUSED BY

THE ACCURATELY DIRECTED AIR STRIKES, THE MEMBERS OF BINH TRAM 39 HATED RECONNAISSANCE PILOTS, AND THIS HATRED APPARENTLY CAUSED THE GUNNERS TO FIRE ON THE DESCENDING PILOT.) THE PILOT LANDED ABOUT 500 METERS NORTH OF BAN HOUAY LAY, AND THE AIRCRAFT IMPACTED ABOUT 500 METERS NORTHWEST OF THE VILLAGE.

2. AFTER WATCHING THE PILOT DESCEND, [REDACTED] RAN TOWARD THE LANDING AREA. AT A BINH TRAM 39 CHECKPOINT ON ROUTE 25B, [REDACTED] MET FOUR MEMBERS OF THE 14TH AAA BATTALION(BN) OF BINH TRAM 39 WHO HAD CARRIED THE DOWNED PILOT FROM HIS LANDING SITE TO THE CHECKPOINT. [REDACTED] TALKED TO THESE MEN AND OBSERVED THE PILOT FOR ABOUT FIVE MINUTES. THE PILOT WAS LYING ON THE GROUND UNCONSCIOUS. HE HAD A ONE-HALF INCH PUNCTURE-TYPE WOUND ABOUT ONE-HALF INCH BELOW HIS RIGHT EAR. [REDACTED] THINKS THE WOUND OCCURRED BEFORE THE PILOT EJECTED FROM THE AIRCRAFT AND WAS PROBABLY CAUSED BY A 37MM SHELL FRAGMENT. THE PILOT ALSO HAD A SERIOUS WOUND ON THE LOWER RIGHT REAR PORTION OF HIS TORSO IN THE AREA OF HIS RIGHT KIDNEY. THE FOUR NVA SOLDIERS WHO HAD CARRIED HIM TO THE CHECKPOINT TOLD [REDACTED] THAT THEY HAD VENTED THEIR ANGER AGAINST THE PILOT BY PURPOSELY DROPPING HIM ONTO A SHARP BAMBOO STUMP WHEN THEY STOPPED AT THE CHECKPOINT TO TAKE A BREAK FROM CARRYING THE HEAVY PILOT. [REDACTED] OBSERVED THAT THE STUMP HAD PENETRATED INTO THE PILOT'S TORSO ABOUT FOUR

INCHES. THE PILOT APPEARED NEARLY DEAD AT THE TIME [REDACTED] OBSERVED HIM. HE WAS ABOUT SIX FEET THREE INCHES TALL, WEIGHED ABOUT 200 POUNDS, HAD AN OVAL FACE WITH A SHARP NOSE AND REDDISH COMPLEXION, BRIGHT YELLOW HAIR OF MEDIUM LENGTH, AND NO MUSTACHE OR BEARD. THE PILOT HAD BEEN STRIPPED DOWN TO HIS T-SHIRT AND SHORTS. HIS CLOTHING AND EQUIPMENT WERE AT THE CHECKPOINT, AND [REDACTED] THINKS THAT IN ACCORDANCE WITH REGULATIONS THEY WERE PROBABLY FORWARDED TO HIGHER ECHELONS TO PROVE THAT THE BN HAD CAPTURED AN AMERICAN PILOT. THIS GEAR INCLUDED A BLACK, ONE-PIECE FLIGHT SUIT, A CHOCOLATE-COLORED FLIGHT HELMET, A FLARE PISTOL AND A REGULAR PISTOL, A PAIR OF BLACK BOOTS WITH RED SOCKS, AND A WRISTWATCH.

3. THE FOUR NVA SOLDIERS DEPARTED THE CHECKPOINT CARRYING THE UNCONSCIOUS PILOT. THEY SAID THEY WERE GOING TO TAKE HIM TO AN NVA DISPENSARY AT BAN DONBOUNG (XC 321674). LATER IN THE DAY [REDACTED] MET THE FOUR SOLDIERS BACK AT THE CHECKPOINT. THEY TOLD HIM THAT THE PILOT HAD DIED BEFORE REACHING THE DISPENSARY AND THAT THEY HAD BURIED HIM NEAR THE TRAIL WHICH RUNS FROM BAN HOUAY LAY, TO BAN DONBOUNG. THEY CHOSE A SITE APPROXIMATELY 500 METERS EAST OF A JUNCTION OF THAT TRAIL WITH A TRAIL WHICH LEADS TO BAN TOUNLAN. THE GRAVE WAS LOCATED APPROXIMATELY 50 METERS SOUTH OF THE TRAIL.

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4. [REDACTED] COMMENT:

A [REDACTED] DID NOT SEE THE BURIAL SITE NOR HAS HE USED THIS TRAIL. AS A RESULT HE IS UNABLE TO GIVE A MORE ACCURATE LOCATION FOR THE BURIAL SITE. AN NVA MAP CAPTURED BY IRREGULARS IN THE LAO NGAM (XC 2510) AREA DEPICTED NVA ROUTE 25 AS BEING THE SAME AS ROUTE 233 AND ROUTE 2389 WHICH EXTENDED FROM ROUTE 99 TO ROUTE 23 VIA THE PADOU VALLEY. NVA ROUTE 25B IS PROBABLY IDENTICAL TO ROUTE 2331 WHICH EXITS ROUTE 233 AT XC 467636 AND GENERALLY PARALLELS ROUTE 233 TO THE WEST TO APPROXIMATELY XC 578636 WHERE IT TURNS NORTH UP THE TOUNLANE VALLEY FOR ABOUT 15 KMS BEFORE JOINING ROUTE 23 AT XC 259751. IF ROUTE 2331 IS NVA ROUTE 25B, THEN BAN HOUAY LAY WOULD BE IN THE AREA OF BAN LACHANG NOY(XC 407649) AND BAN LACHANG ONAI(XC 425651). AN ANALYSIS OF PHOTOGRAPHY DATED 13 SEPTEMBER 1972 REVEALED THAT THESE TWO VILLAGES APPEARED TO BE ABANDONED. AN ACTIVE, UNNAMED VILLAGE WAS OBSERVED AT XC 413630. THIS VILLAGE CONTAINED EIGHT STRUCTURES AND WAS LOCATED ABOUT 600 METERS NORTH OF ROUTE 2331 AND ABOUT TEN KMS EAST-SOUTHEAST OF BAN TOUNLAN. IT IS POSSIBLE THAT THIS UNNAMED VILLAGE(XC 413630) IS THE VILLAGE OF BAN HOUAY LAY. NO OTHER VILLAGE OR GROUPS OF FOUR OR MORE STRUCTURES WERE OBSERVED WITHIN TWO KMS OF THIS VILLAGE.

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B. CORRELATING DATE, LOCATION AND TYPE OF AIRCRAFT TO JOINT PRISONER RECOVERY CENTER RECORDS INDICATES THAT THE PILOT SEEN BY [REDACTED] MAY BE 1ST LIEUTENANT (LT) ARTHUR E. H A R D Y, WHO WAS SHOT DOWN WHILE PILOTING AN OV-10 AIRCRAFT ON 14 MARCH 1972. THE PILOT MADE LAST RADIO CONTACT WHILE IN THE VICINITY OF XC 475708. [REDACTED] WAS SHOWN A NUMBER OF PHOTOGRAPHS OF CAPTURED PERSONNEL BUT DID NOT SELECT THE PHOTOGRAPH OF LT. HARDY. INSTEAD, HE CHOSE A PHOTOGRAPH OF 1ST LT CARTER A. H O W E L L AS MOST NEARLY RESEMBLING THE DOWNED PILOT HE SAW, BUT HE COULD NOT MAKE A POSITIVE IDENTIFICATION. HE NOTED THAT HAIR LENGTH, THOUGH NOT THE RIGHT COLOR, SHAPE OF FACE AND YOUTHFULNESS OF THE PERSON IN THIS PHOTOGRAPH WERE PRIMARY FACTORS IN HIS SELECTION. HOWELL WAS THE PILOT OF AN F4E WHICH WAS LOST ON 7 MARCH 1972 IN THE VICINITY OF XC 632765.)

6. [REDACTED] DISSEN. EMBASSY, AMATT, AIRATT AT VIENTIANE. SENT TO
CINCPAC, ARPAC, PACAF, PACFLT, MACV, 7TH AF, 7/13TH AF, TFA/NKP,
7TH RRFS,