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PENTAGON  
OPERATIONS DIRECTORATE

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PRIORITY

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FM FBIS BANGKOK TH

TO RUCWAAA/FBIS RESTON VA

RAYWYA/ONA CANBERRA AS

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RUADANW/CG FIRST MAW//G2//

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RUAJMAB/FOSIF WESTPAC KAMI SEYA JA

RUCIPGA/HQ AFESC TYNDALL AFB FL//DEHM//

RUDKMKB/FBIS LONDON UK//BBC//

RUDMNOP/NAVOPINTCEN SUITLAND MD

RUOPMAX/FAISA FT BRAGG NC

RUEACMC/CMC WASH DC//MSPA-1 INTC//

RUEACNP/COMNAVMILPERSCOM WASH DC//NMPC-12//

RUEADWD/CSA WASHINGTON DC//DAAG-CAD//

RUEAHQA/AFIA WASHINGTON DC

RUEBFGA/VOA WASH DC

RUEBHAA/STORAGE CENTER FBIS RESTON VA

RUEHBT/AMEMBASSY BANGKOK

RUEHC/SECSTATE WASHINGTON DC//INR/EAP//

RUEHC/SECSTATE WASHINGTON DC//D/PW//

RUEHC/SECSTATE WASHINGTON DC//EAP/VLC//

RUEHC/SECSTATE WASHINGTON DC//INR/SEA//

RUEHGP/AMEMBASSY SINGAPORE

RUEKJCS/DEFINTAGENCY WASH DC

RUEOACC/CDR PSYOPGP FT BRAGG NC//ASOF-POG-SB//

RUETIAV/MPC FT GEO G MEADE MD

RUHDBKT/DATT-TLO BANGKOK TH

RUHHDHA/CINCPACAF HICKAM AFB HI//XP//

RUHHDHA/HQ PACAF IDHS HICKAM AFB HI

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RULWIOC/SAC INTELLIGENCE OPS CNT OFFUTT AFB NE

RUMJBP/FBIS OKINAWA JA

RUMJHK/FBIS HONG KONG

RUMRABA/CG THIRD MARDIV

RUMTFS/AMEMBASSY VIENTIANE

RUWSMXX/MAC INTEL CEN SCOTT AFB IL//INO//

RUYLBH/DODSPECREP OKINAWA JA

RUYLSDE/NAVSECGRUACT HANZA JA

ACCT FBBK-EWDK

UNCLAS 4M

WARNING: ATTN BANGKOK AE  
ATTN BANGKOK LOCAL

SERIAL: BK1907122891

PASS: ATTN POL

COUNTRY: THAILAND

SUBJ: SRV ENVOY -- PROSPECT OF LIVING U.S. MIAS UNLIKELY

SOURCE: HONG KONG AFP IN ENGLISH 1213 GMT 19 JUL 91

TEXT:

\*\*\* MESSAGE PREPARATION HINT \*\*\*  
 IN MESSAGE ADDRESSES, THERE ARE NO SPACES BETWEEN UNIT NUMBERS  
 AND ORGANIZATION ABBREVIATIONS (I.E. 366TFW VICE 366 TFW).

AFIA...ACT

CIA-910719-631

MCN=91200/20411 TOR=91200/1240Z TAD=91200/1240Z  
 \*AIR FORCE MESSAGE\*

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((TEXT)) BANGKOK, JULY 19 (AFP) -- VIETNAM'S AMBASSADOR TO THAILAND SAID FRIDAY HE HAD NO IDEA WHETHER A RECENTLY RELEASED PHOTOGRAPH PURPORTING TO SHOW THREE U.S. SERVICEMEN MISSING IN ACTION DURING THE VIETNAM WAR (MIAS) WAS AUTHENTIC.

HE REITERATED, HOWEVER, HIS GOVERNMENT'S STATED POLICY THAT VIETNAM IS HOLDING NO MISSING AMERICAN SERVICEMEN.

"I CAN'T IMAGINE THAT THERE ARE ANY AMERICANS (MISSING IN ACTION) ALIVE IN VIETNAM," AMBASSADOR NGUYEN TRUNG SAID.

THE PHOTOGRAPH SHOWING THREE MALE CAUCASIANS TURNED UP IN ONE OF THE CAMBODIAN REFUGEE CAMPS INSIDE THAILAND BEFORE BEING SENT TO THE UNITED STATES, ACCORDING TO WELL-INFORMED SOURCES HERE.

MR. TRUNG EXPRESSED SYMPATHY FOR THE FAMILIES OF MISSING SERVICEMEN AND SAID THAT MANY VIETNAMESE SERVICEMEN ARE ALSO STILL MISSING.

"EVEN NOW IN VIETNAM WE STILL HAVE THOUSANDS OF MISSING PEOPLE. EVERY DAY THEIR FAMILIES ASK FOR ASSISTANCE IN FINDING THEM," HE SAID.

"WE UNDERSTAND THE PAIN, THE BURDEN WHICH THESE PEOPLE IN THE U.S. (FAMILIES OF MIAS) HAVE TO SUFFER," HE ADDED.

THE AMBASSADOR SAID VIETNAM CONSIDERED THE MIA ISSUE A HUMANITARIAN PROBLEM AND HIS COUNTRY HAD DONE ITS BEST TO COOPERATE WITH THE UNITED STATES IN SOLVING IT. "IF THERE IS ANY NEW INFORMATION WE INVESTIGATE IT," HE SAID.

HE ADDED THAT INVESTIGATION TEAMS HAD TRAVELLED THROUGHOUT VIETNAM BUT HAVE FOUND NO EVIDENCE OF ANY LIVING MIAS.

ACCORDING TO THE U.S. GOVERNMENT, 2,273 U.S. SERVICEMEN ARE OFFICIALLY MISSING, 1,656 IN VIETNAM, 528 IN LAOS, 83 IN CAMBODIA, AND SIX IN CHINESE TERRITORIAL WATERS.

(ENDALL) RS501907.014 191213 STEPHENSON/CM 19/1237Z JUL BT

\*AIR FORCE MESSAGE\*

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OTHER MAIN PREREQUISITE FOR NORMALISATION -- THE SETTLEMENT OF THE CAMBODIAN CONFLICT -- HAS MADE SURPRISING PROGRESS IN RECENT WEEKS WITH THE WARRING FACTIONS REACHING AGREEMENTS THAT PAVE THE WAY FOR PEACE.

THE U.S. GOVERNMENT HAS NOT CONFIRMED THE AUTHENTICITY OF THE PHOTOGRAPH, WHICH COULD HAVE BEEN TAKEN IN 1990 AND SHOWS THREE MEN IDENTIFIED BY THEIR FAMILIES AS PILOTS SHOT DOWN OVER INDOCHINA IN 1966, 1969 AND 1970.

THE VIETNAMESE GOVERNMENT REAFFIRMED THURSDAY THAT IT WAS NOT HOLDING ANY U.S. PRISONERS OF WAR AND OFFERED TO COOPERATE FULLY OVER THE MIA AND POW ISSUES.

ACCORDING TO THE PENTAGON, A TOTAL OF 2,273 U.S. SERVICEMEN DISAPPEARED IN INDOCHINA, SOME 1,656 OF THEM IN VIETNAM, 528 IN LAOS, 83 IN CAMBODIA AND SIX IN CHINESE TERRITORIAL WATERS.

HANOI HAS INSISTED IT HANDED BACK ALL U.S. PRISONERS, BUT HAS SUGGESTED SOME DESERTERS MAY BE LIVING IN REMOTE, INACCESSIBLE REGIONS.

CAMBODIA HAS MADE SIMILAR DECLARATIONS, WHICH ARE CREDIBLE IN THAT U.S. PRISONERS WOULD HAVE BEEN UNLIKELY TO SURVIVE THE XENOPHOBIC, FANATICAL KHMER ROUGE REGIME THAT GOVERNED THE COUNTRY FROM 1975 TO EARLY 1979.

IN 1982, LAOS RAISED THE POSSIBILITY THAT SOME OF THE SERVICEMEN WERE STILL BEING HELD IN ZONES OUTSIDE THE CENTRAL GOVERNMENT'S CONTROL.

VIETNAM SAID SATURDAY THAT ONE OF THE SERVICEMEN DEPICTED, COLONEL JOHN L. ROBERTSON, WAS DEAD AND THAT HIS REMAINS HAD BEEN HANDED BACK. THE PENTAGON STRESSED HOWEVER THAT EXPERTS COULD NOT IDENTIFY THE REMAINS.

IF THE PHOTOGRAPH PROVES TO BE AUTHENTIC, IT WOULD BE THE FIRST PIECE OF TANGIBLE EVIDENCE THAT U.S. SERVICEMEN MAY STILL BE BEING HELD IN VIETNAM.

MOST WESTERN DIPLOMATS HERE WERE SCEPTICAL HOWEVER.

"IT DOESN'T MAKE SENSE TO DETAIN PRISONERS SECRETLY," ONE WESTERN DIPLOMAT SAID. "ONE ONLY HOLDS PRISONERS DELIBERATELY TO EXCHANGE THEM LATER FOR SOMETHING ELSE."

ANOTHER WESTERN DIPLOMAT SUGGESTED THE VIETNAMESE HAD KEPT THOSE PRISONERS WHOSE PHYSICAL OR MENTAL CONDITION WAS SO BAD THAT THEY WERE NOT PRESENTABLE.

"BUT IN THAT CASE IT IS DIFFICULT TO IMAGINE THAT THEY WOULD HAVE SURVIVED THIS LONG," HE SAID.

THE DIPLOMATS SAID THAT IF VIETNAM HAD HELD ONTO U.S. PRISONERS, IT SHOULD HAVE TO PAY AN EXORBITANT PENALTY.

"THAT WOULD CAST DOUBT ON HANOI POLICY IN RECENT YEARS OF NORMALISING RELATIONS WITH THE UNITED STATES TO OBTAIN THE LIFTING OF THE ECONOMIC EMBARGO IMPOSED BY WASHINGTON SINCE THE END OF THE WAR," ONE DIPLOMAT SAID.

"THE U.S. REACTION WOULD BE VERY NEGATIVE, BUT SO WOULD THAT FROM OTHER WESTERN COUNTRIES," ONE DIPLOMAT FROM WESTERN EUROPE SAID, ADDING THAT THIS WOULD BE A MAJOR SETBACK TO THE COUNTRY'S ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT.

VIETNAM, CURRENTLY FACING A GRAVE ECONOMIC CRISIS AS SOVIET AID IS CUT BACK, IS SEEKING AID FROM THE WEST AND INTERNATIONAL FINANCIAL ORGANISATIONS, WHICH HAS LONG BEEN BLOCKED BY THE U.S. ECONOMIC EMBARGO.

THE MIA ISSUE MUST BE TREATED AS A HUMANITARIAN QUESTION, THE VIETNAMESE GOVERNMENT HAS ALWAYS MAINTAINED, STRESSING THAT IT IS SENSITIVE TO THE FEELINGS OF THE SERVICEMEN'S FAMILIES.

BY CONTRAST, THE VIETNAMESE PEOPLE APPEAR INDIFFERENT. "THE FRENCH TOO HAVE THEIR MIAS, WE HAVE OURS AND ONE ISN'T MAKING A BIG ISSUE OF THEM," PEOPLE OFTEN RESPOND WHEN QUESTIONED ON THE SUBJECT.

THE VIETNAMESE OFTEN DISMISS MIA INVESTIGATIONS AS, AT BEST, A WASTE OF TIME AND, AT WORST, A PRETEXT PROMOTED BY ANTI-VIETNAMESE DEFECTORS IN THE UNITED STATES TO SLOW NORMALISATION.

(ENDALL) DB502007.027 200637 BADGLEY/BT 20/0801Z JUL BT

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\*AIR FORCE MESSAGE\*

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