

SUBJECT: Review of U.S. PWs in the Republic of Vietnam

A. General Comments:

1. The considerable amount of research that has gone into this study as it stands is obvious and your objectives are undoubtedly of the highest, but it is felt that a wealth of additional information could be provided by other Military Services as well as this Agency's offices directly involved in similar studies.

2. Although it is clearly stated that this study is for use by Army schools, I wonder whether such a single service program is the answer. Navy, Air Force, and the Marines are all taking a hard look at the treatment of U.S. prisoners, and it would seem that the enemy in South East Asia, regardless of country, makes no differentiation among the Services--or even most civilians for that matter--in their standards of treatment. Therefore, it would seem appropriate to produce an overall paper on "Treatment" which could be used not only in all military training schools but also as an authoritative document which might provide Defense and State with guide lines for public releases, official doctrine, and possibly international policy.

3. Possibly a more cogent, coherent, and "informative" review could be derived from the somewhat limited amount of information available if the data were first fit into the framework of the Behavior Modification Program (attached) which has been adopted by the USSR, PRC, DPRK, DRV, and now the VC. (Hereinafter, VC is used in the same sense as employed in the study, i.e., VC-VC and NVA in RVN. However, it should be pointed out that there is a danger in this use of "VC" in that the reader may tend to forget how the term is used and apply it to the VC alone. Also, this use does not allow for possible differentiations later between VC and DRV treatment.) The VC, to date, have not evidenced the finesse of the DRV though they do appear customarily to utilize isolation techniques in conjunction with their interrogations.

4. The efficacy of the indoctrination efforts by the VC are summarily dismissed in the study as crude and unproductive. Yet, certain facts reported by returnees do not support that contention. For example, one reported he was "encouraged" to participate in indoctrination so that he might "remain alive until the end of the war..." Again, a prisoner (returned) commented that the indoctrination was: "very effective if applied to PW's... subjected to a prolonged period of isolation".

5. In summary, it is felt that this review could become an exceptionally useful part of an overall study on "Treatment", and its value could be further enhanced by weaving the isolated facts of treatment into the fabric of the Behavior Modification Program which appears to be the basic tool employed to control and exploit PWs.

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B. Specific Comments:

1. Unless new evidence has come to light, the comments in paragraph B regarding forging or superimposition of signatures are conjectural and should be noted as such. The VC have little need to forge or misuse signatures of captives. If the VC's point in obtaining "apologies" is simply to get a handwriting sample, they are going to unnecessary effort...they may simply present the PW with the IRC Capture Card. To continue the contention that Communist captors traditionally forge PW signatures to incriminating documents places the PW in a highly vulnerable position. For example, [redacted] USMC, believed his Chinese captors would forge his signature to highly incriminating documents after they had killed him. On that basis, he rationalized that it was better to stay alive and give them his true signature to several (as he thought) less incriminating documents. Naturally, once he began signing, the Chicom used his earlier documents to convince him he had no alternative but to sign later documents they devised for him.

2. Also in paragraph B there appears to be a little over-emphasis on photos of PWs with "misleading captions". Photos of PWs are more frequently used to degrade the U.S. prisoners, e.g., showing the superiority of even women and children over the "Big Bully Americans".

3. The discussion on negroes, and Mexican and Puerto Rican Americans sounds like an evaluated judgment without adequate support of facts. While it is known that the VC use minority problems as propaganda and psychological levers there is no evidence that Negro Americans have been particularly vulnerable; nor can we assert definitively that the Mexican and Puerto Rican Americans have not been targets of the "down-trodden masses" approach to propaganda and psychological manipulation. In fact two recent Puerto Rican releases were given quite a propaganda pitch during their captivity.

4. Paragraph F-1. In addition to the "3-known executions of U.S. Army PWs all in 1965", [redacted] was executed at a church in Ngo Xa Dong on 20 May 1967 along with Marine [redacted]. Para. F-3. Here, and occasionally throughout the paper, there seems to be some diversion from the subject--confusing what a PW can do with what an evadee (before becoming a PW) can do. For example, it is highly unlikely that PW's will have access to "chemical additives" for purifying water.

5. Paragraph G, the second sentence starting with "U.S. battlefield casualties" is open to question. I have not seen adequate reporting to substantiate such a firm position. Furthermore, it is open-ended in that there is no explanation of what does happen--are they left behind? killed? ignored?

6. In the same paragraph regarding dental hygiene, it might be pointed out more forcefully that PWs who have not adopted local methods to keep their teeth clean have frequently lost many of their teeth through neglect. However, one of the few things that the VC frequently issue is a toothbrush.

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7. In paragraph H-2, it is suggested that the following change be made: "Taped messages allegedly from PWs and suitably edited..." to replace the words "taped PW messages suitably edited...".

8. In the same paragraph at the bottom, I question the generality implied in the "time to time" although I certainly agree with the major point that little effort has been made toward the psychological exploitation of visits of left-wing press representatives.

9. Paragraph J, here and again in the concluding sentence on page 14, the study creates an impression that was perhaps not intended. By referring to a "possible" concealed act of collaboration by a released PW, a pall of suspicion is cast over all returned PWs. The comments equate release through civilian groups or governments sympathetic to the VC cause as the hallmark of "cooperative PWs or defectors". To date the best information available has reinforced the belief that nothing the prisoner can do or say will achieve his release. The final determination of his release, and the medium selected by his captors are based largely on political considerations of the moment. In the absence of further evidence, it appears inappropriate to subject returned PWs to formal or even casual doubt and suspicion regarding the quality of their behavior in confinement.

10. Paragraph J, although the statements are correct, there appears to be increasing evidence that U.S. PWs are being transported and probably held in areas outside of the SVN geographic area. A study has recently been completed on this subject.

11. Paragraph K-1. The comments on this paragraph are critical and are generally supported by PWs through the years. Given the peculiar situation of the VC detention practices, this portion of the review might be expanded by proposing tasks for the PWs which would both keep them alert and make them valuable sources of positive intelligence should they be released. For example: identifying land marks; memorizing names of other PWs; describing interrogators, guards and camp commandants, and noting their weaknesses.

12. Paragraph K-2. I disagree with the statement that "free communication between U.S. PWs is normally permitted". In many cases, certain prisoners are continuously kept isolated from others. The suggested methods of communication are good, but I disagree that none of them have been discovered. In fact, in several known cases where written communication was attempted, the messages were discovered and the prisoners were either warned or punished. Also there is a danger that a clever enemy, once having discovered a dead drop for prison messages, may be able to use that dead drop against the prisoners. The "children's" method of spelling out words with

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the letters formed by fingers might also be mentioned in instances where prisoners are in sight of each other but cannot risk open communication.

13. Paragraph K-3. I question the statement that the concealment of items in the places indicated "has proved to be of value". Is this documented? I would prefer "could be of value".

14. Paragraph L. I feel that the "basic escape requirements" consist less of the physical items mentioned than of the mental attitude and determination of the PW--assuming of course that he has received some basic training.

15. Paragraph L. I question again the positive tone of the last sentence claiming that "matches, money, and iodine tablets are useful". Money is a very doubtful asset. Many would-be helpers would be most reluctant to accept U.S. money for fear of being caught with "evidence". Iodine tablets are extremely soluble and unless they are in an air-tight moisture proof container, they could cause severe burns in vital places if concealed in shorts.

16. Paragraph M-3. I feel that the description of the things PWs have managed to return with is greatly exaggerated. Some---yes---but the average---no. Also it is not true that "routes of return for released PWs have ultimately led to neighboring countries". In fact, most of the escapees and returnees held in SVN, both military and civilian, have been received by U.S. authorities directly in SVN. Also I question somewhat the statement that the VC have made several promises to return bodies of PWs who were executed by the VC. There may have been a rare instance of this particularly if the PW had died while in captivity, but even this seems unnecessary and contrary to their policy because the VC will seldom acknowledge by name any PW held.

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