

CENTRAL INTELLIGENCE AGENCY

WASHINGTON, D.C. 20505

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18 NOV 1980

MEMORANDUM FOR: Mr. Richard Holbrooke
Assistant Secretary of State
for East Asian and Pacific Affairs
Department of State

Lieutenant General Eugene F. Tighe, Jr.
Director, Defense Intelligence Agency

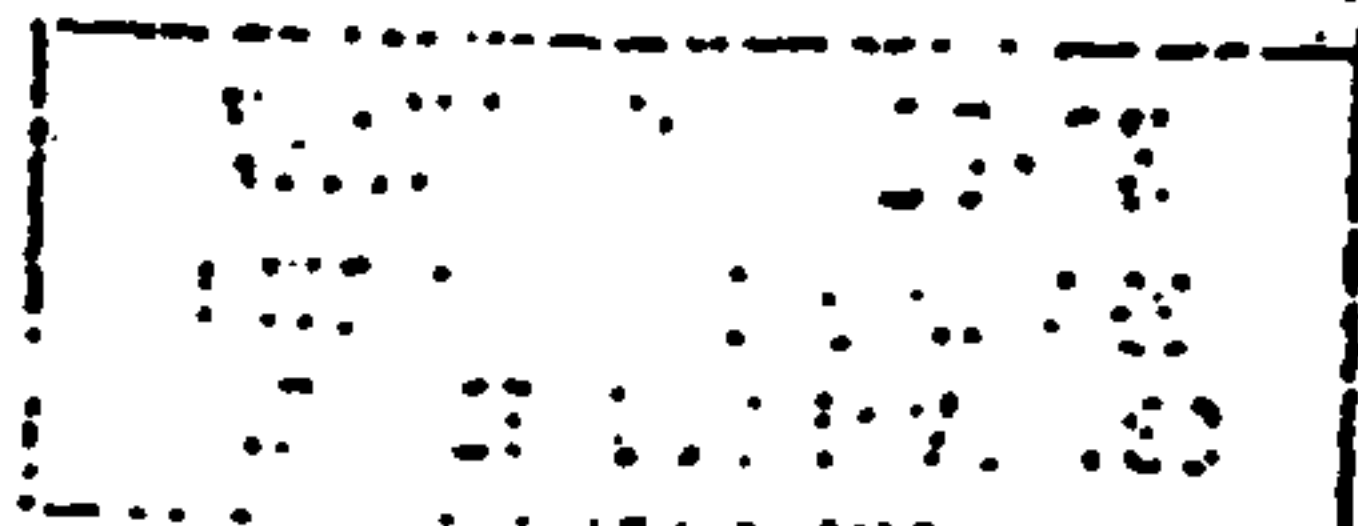
Mr. Ronald I. Spiers
Director, Bureau of Intelligence and Research
Department of State

FROM: John N. McMahon
Deputy Director for Operations

SUBJECT: Alleged Presence of American Prisoners of War
in the Lao People's Democratic Republic

[redacted]
alleged presence of American prisoners of war (POWs) in the
Lao People's Democratic Republic (LPDR). [redacted]

2. [redacted] some thirty American POWs,
all flyers who were shot down over Laos during the Indochina
war, are being held in or near the town of [redacted]
[redacted] and are being used as workers on a road
construction project in that area. [redacted]
[redacted]



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[redacted]
[redacted] that the LPLA unit guarding the POWs is disaffected, is considering defecting to Thailand and in the process might [redacted]

[redacted] to the area in question to attempt to obtain photos of the prisoners and their names.

3. We are skeptical of the accuracy of the above information for several reasons. [redacted]

[redacted] Secondly, we think it unlikely that the LPDR would hold prisoners of such sensitivity in an area less than 50 kilometers from the LPDR border with Thailand. Finally, no explanation has been offered or readily presents itself for the LPDR's possible motivation for holding American POWs.

4. The nature of the subject is, however, such as to necessitate a maximum effort to confirm or refute the accuracy of the information. [redacted] who was expected to depart Thailand for Laos on 17 November 1980, plans to return to Thailand circa 1 December and has promised to provide [redacted] at that time with any photos, names of prisoners or other information [redacted]

[redacted] from October 1979 and shows no evidence of road construction or a compound likely to house prisoners. (Our request for [redacted] coverage has been predicated only upon interest in the construction of new routes from Vietnam to Laos, in order to hold the POW information as closely as possible.)

5. We request that you review information holdings of your Agency to determine whether there are indications which tend to confirm the presence of POWs in or near [redacted]

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6. Such further information as we are able to obtain will be provided to you immediately. Pending the receipt of additional reporting, we request that the above be very closely held in view of the sensitivity of our source, the sensational nature of the allegation and the absence of any confirmation.

[REDACTED]
John N. McMahon

[REDACTED]

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