

SECRET-

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SUBJECT: Sighting of an American Male Hiding in Southern Socialist Republic of Vietnam.

1. According to an itinerant tradesman who sold floor mats and purchased items at the Socialist Republic of Vietnam (SRV)-Kampuchean border in the Chau Doc area of An Giang Province in the southern part of the SRV, on three occasions in the 1979-80 period he saw an American male Caucasian, whose name he did not know, hiding in a small Buddhist pagoda in the Seven Mountains area of An Giang Province. The last visit with the American occurred about mid-February 1980. Comment: The source could not recall the name of the pagoda or its location. The tradesman stated that the ten or so monks at the pagoda were frequently harassed by local SRV Public Security officials. The tradesman was described as a sincere person who had had no contact with Americans before the fall of the Saigon government in 1975.)

2. Circa March 1979 the American, who spoke Vietnamese well, told the tradesman that he was an American who had been stranded in Vietnam after April 1975 and that he had been hidden at the pagoda for a long time. All three meetings between the American and the tradesman were at night because the American apparently feared discovery if he left his secret room in daylight hours. The American said that he never left the pagoda, where he slept in a secret room. He appeared to be suffering from malnutrition. Comment: The tradesman did not provide the American's physical description, background information, or reason for hiding in this particular pagoda. The relationship of the tradesman to the monks of the pagoda is also unknown, but it may have been connected with his trading activities or with contacts with Buddhists the tradesman made when he attended a Hoa Hao school before 1975. The pagoda could also have been a convenient place for the tradesman to stop in his travels.)

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