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Duy Think in 22 April NHAN DAN: ''A Clumsy Cooked- Up Story''

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[Article by Duy Think in 22 April NHAN DAN: ''A
Clumsy Cooked- Up Story'']

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[Text] A Russian document relating to American prisoners of war recently has caused a sensation among the American public. This document was allegedly found early this year by a Harvard University scholar in the Institute of Archives of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union in Moscow and was published in THE NEW YORK TIMES on 12 April.

..TEXT:

This sensational document was titled: Report by Deputy Chief of the Vietnamese Peoples' Army [VPA] General Staff, Lieutenant General Tran Van Quang, at a meeting of the party Central Committee Political Bureau on 15 September 1972. The document can be summed up as follows:

..TEXT:

There were as many as 1,205 American prisoners of war, mainly pilots but including high-ranking officers and astronauts, being detained in Vietnam. American prisoners of war were divided into three categories, namely progressive, neutral, and reactionary. Those classified as progressive were planned to be released first.

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Based on these figures, some American newspapers have jumped to the conclusion that Vietnam might have killed as many 600 American prisoners of war.

..TEXT:

After a careful check of this document, it can be said in sure terms that the contents of the document totally do not conform to reality. First of all, Lt. Gen. Tran Van Quang-as addressed according to his present military rank-who is alleged to be the author of the document, did not have the rank of deputy chief of the General Staff in the period between 1965 and 1973. At that time, he was commander of the Fourth Military Zone and then commander and political commissar of the B-4 Battlefield, which was the Tri-Thien- Hue Battlefield. During such fierce war years as 1972, he was unable to and had no responsibility for reviewing general issues such as the MIA issue. He has never written any document on this issue. Moreover, there was no meeting of the Political Bureau on 15 September 1972.

..TEXT:

Gen. Tran Van Quang said that all the reports written by him on his assigned duties during the period between 1961 and 1975 carried his cover name, Bay Tien, and that none of the reports bore his real name, Tran Van Quang. He himself read the Russian document and found that the wording used in the document was not Vietnamese style. Moreover, the American POW issue was then under the responsibility of the VPA Political General Department. In terms of the contents of the document, the figure of 1,205 American prisoners of war allegedly held captive is much higher than the official figure obtained by the United States. According to various documents made public by the U.S. State and Defense Departments and confirmed by the U.S. Senate Select Committee on POW/MIA Affairs in its latest report on 31 January 1993, when the war ended, there were 1,172 American people still missing in Indochina whose destiny is unknown.

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Of this number, there were only 798 cases in Vietnam. Since then, Vietnam has, with its cooperative humanitarian efforts, handed over to the United States more

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than 500 sets of human remains and has cooperated with the U.S. Government in investigating over 70 reports on live Americans and 135 cases of questionable dossiers.

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After the signing of the Paris agreement in 1973, Vietnam has handed over to the United States all American prisoners of war captured in Vietnam. Up to now, there is no evidence of any American prisoners being detained or living of their own free will in Vietnam. Concerning the charge of detaining three American astronauts, the U.S. Defense Department and the U.S. National Aeronautic and Space Agency-NASA-have affirmed that there were no American astronauts captured in Vietnam.

..TEXT:

Meanwhile, the Office Searching for Missing Americans in Vietnam has checked and found that a number of the names of prisoners in the Russian document did not appear in the [office's] list of American prisoners of war in Vietnam. The Russian document is also wrong to say that American prisoners of war were divided into three categories-progressive, neutral, and reactionary-because the United States has acknowledged that Vietnam handed over prisoners in accordance with the time they were captured. This charge even insulted those American prisoners who were repatriated.

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It should be further noted here that Mr. Morris, the man who found this document, is not considered an independent scholar by the American public, but a person who has many political prejudices and who nurtures a great hatred against Vietnam. He is trying to undermine, in a frenzied manner, the normalization of U.S.-Vietnamese relations.

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This truth is as clear as broad daylight. Gen. John Vessey himself also asserted in his 19 April news conference in Hanoi that after two days in Vietnam he became more skeptical about the authenticity of the Russian document and belived the valuable information provided by Gen. Tran Van Quang because it was in conformity with reality.

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The correspondents of various U.S. newspapers such as THE WASHINGTON POST and THE NEW YORK TIMES, who covered the news conference, have all pointed out that Gen. Vessey said there was no reason for him to disbelieve Vietnam's denial.

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Mr. H.B. Franklin, a professor at Rutgers University who specializes in conducting research on British and U.S. affairs, said the Russian document was a clumsy cooked-up story. There were no events in the document that conform to historical reality.

..TEXT:

Thus, it is crystal clear that the Russian document, which had been made public before Gen. John Vessey's trip to Vietnam, was only aimed at undermining the steps toward normalizing U.S.-Vietnam relations as was previously the case with those fabrications about a photograph of alleged American prisoners of war and about Vietnam's **sending** American prisoners to the Soviet Union. The maliciousness of those orchestrating the theatrical play about the Russian document is that they unreservedly released the document to draw public attention-even if it was later found to be fake.

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..TEXT:

Prompted by its traditional humanitarian policy, Vietnam considers the **MIA** issue a genuinely humanitarian issue not to be linked to any political issues. We have been and are showing our goodwill by cooperating with the U.S. Government in settling the **MIA** issue in a humanitarian spirit. It is necessary for the U.S. side to make the American people know the truth concerning the **MIA** issue and to stop all the tricks-such as spreading fabricated news which outrageously insults Vietnam-employed by those who are deliberately benefiting from the agony of many American families, who are poking a stick into the wheel of a vehicle in the hope of containing the wholesome trend of the Vietnam-U.S. relations, thus doing harm to the interests of the two peoples, and running counter to the trend toward peace, stability, and development in the region and the world.

..TEXT: