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..Document-Number:  
DEA3-000024343

..AFS\_NUMBER:  
BK1409091593

..REPORT\_DATE:  
09/14/1993

..HEADLINE:  
Army Paper Decries Russian POW Document

..REPORT\_TYPE:  
Daily report

..AFS\_NUMBER:  
BK1409091593

..REPORT\_NUMBER:  
FBIS-EAS-93-176

..REPORT\_DATE:  
19930914

..REPORT\_VOLUME:  
Tuesday Vol IV No 176

..REPORT\_SERIES:  
Daily Report

..START\_PAGE:  
52

..END\_PAGE:  
53

..REPORT\_DIVISION:  
**SOUTHEAST ASIA**

..REPORT\_SUBDIVISION:  
Vietnam

..AG\_FILE\_FLAG:

..UDC\_NUMBER:

..REPORT\_NAME:  
East Asia

..CLASSIFICATION:  
UNCLASSIFIED

..LANGUAGE:  
Vietnamese

..DISSEMINATION:

..SOURCE\_VOL\_NO:

..DOCUMENT\_DATE:  
930913

..CITY\_SOURCE:  
Hanoi Voice of Vietnam Network

..HEADLINE:  
Army Paper Decries Russian POW Document

..SUBHEADLINE:

..AUTHOR:  
Quang Loi: ''A Type of Trading on the Suffering of Other People.'']

..AUTHOR:

..AFFILIATION:

..TARGET\_OF\_BROADCAST:

..REFERENCE:

..SOURCE\_LINE:  
BK1409091593 Hanoi Voice of Vietnam Network in  
Vietnamese 1430 GMT 13 Sep 93

..SUBSLUG:  
[Commentary from 12 September QUAN DOI NHAN  
DAN by Quang Loi: ''A Type of Trading on the Suffering  
of Other People.'']

..SUBSLUG:

..REPORT\_TOC:

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[Commentary from 12 September QUAN DOI NHAN

**APPROVED FOR RELEASE**  
**DATE: FEB 2001**

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DAN by Quang Loi: ''A Type of Trading on the Suffering of Other People.'']

..TEXT:

[Text] The issue of Russian documents related to American POW's during the Vietnam war has again hit the headlines. This time a document, allegedly originated from Soviet military intelligence, has fabricated that Vietnam held captive 735 U.S. pilots in the early 1970's, instead of 368 as announced by Vietnam.

..TEXT:

This document also fabricated a story that the Vietnam Workers Party Central Committee's 20th plenum, which is said to have been held in late 1970 or early 1971, discussed the U.S. POW issue.

..TEXT:

Our country's Foreign Ministry spokesman rejected this Russian document on 9 September as an ill-intentioned fabrication and asserted: At the time of the signing of the Paris agreement, Vietnam had in hand 585 American and foreign POW's and returned all of them to the U.S. Government in March 1973. So far, no U.S. POW's left behind after the war have been held captive in Vietnam.

..TEXT:

This is not the first time that such a Russian document of this type has surfaced. One can still recall that early in April this year there was a similar Russian document released by certain people claiming that this was a Russian translation of a 1972 report from General Tran Van Quang, deputy chief of the General Staff to the Political Bureau. According to this document, Hanoi had held captive 1,205 U.S. POW's as of mid-September 1972. Of course, the U.S. side could not ignore the phenomenal substance of this Russian document. While U.S. intelligence specialists were themselves busy studying this document, General John Vessey, the U.S. presidential special envoy, flew to Hanoi to meet General Tran Van Quang in order to obtain first-hand knowledge of the authenticity of the Russian document.

..TEXT:

In an interview granted to QUAN DOI NHAN DAN following this meeting, General Tran Van Quang pointed out that this document was sheer fabrication; that during the period 1965-74, he held the position of commander of the Fourth Military Region and then commander and political commissar of the B-4 Front encompassing the Tri Thien Hue region; and that he never held any jobs having to do with U.S. POW's and thereby never wrote any documents on this issue. As for General John Vessey, he also said he was suspicious about the authenticity of this document.

..TEXT:

After spending some time studying this document, U.S. specialists involved concluded: The Russian document put the figure of U.S. POW's too high to be trusted.

..TEXT:

That first Russian document was released at a time when President Bill Clinton was examining the possibility of the United States ceasing to prevent the International Monetary Fund, IMF, from offering loans to Vietnam—a spontaneous act toward lifting the embargo.

..TEXT:

It is not a coincidence that this second Russian document has been released at a time when the U.S. President is facing a difficult decision as to whether he should extend or lift the embargo against Vietnam, which has

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been in place over the past 18 years.

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One should recall that a little more than a year ago, motivated by some obscure feelings, Mr. (Kalogyn) [words indistinct] fabricated that Vietnam **sent** some U.S. **POW's** to the former Soviet Union's Siberia region for detention and he personally interrogated these U.S. **POW's**. Mr. (Kalogyn)'s allegation sparked a public controversy in Washington. A U.S. investigation committee was immediately **sent** to Moscow to look into this issue. The committee's conclusion was that (Kalogyn)'s allegation was groundless. (Kalogyn) was also invited to Washington to answer questions at various U.S. professional agencies. It is a sad fact for (Kalogyn) that the myth he fabricated had only one effect, that is, it made him a laughing stock.

..TEXT:

When recalling the process of solving the **POW/MIA** issue, one should not fail to point out the fact that there were numerous touts [teen cof mooif] who, out of their desire for money, made up stories and provided the U.S. side with fabricated information. They claimed that U.S. **POW's** were detained in thatched houses enclosed with bamboo walls. They even doctored a photograph of some Russian men, which they cut out of a former Soviet magazine and **sent** to the United States, claiming that they personally took this photo of U.S. **POW's** still held captive in Indochina. All these sensational details are, indeed, enough to make a thrilling detective **movie**.

..TEXT:

These types of efforts to earn money in an inhuman way in the past were limited to certain bad elements of the Vietnamese exile community. But now, this trading on the suffering of American families with loved ones who died or disappeared during the Vietnam war seems to be taking on an international character.

..TEXT:

The Vietnam war has been over for nearly 20 years now, but the time does not seem to be long enough to make the United States forget an unprecedented tragedy that hurt its strength and credibility as a superpower, which had been regarded as invincible.

..TEXT:

For a few years now, the internal ranks of the United States have been split into two camps. The bulk of the American people, especially the manufacturing and business circles, wish to see the U.S. Administration promptly lift its embargo against Vietnam and normalize relations. Whereas, the other camp -made up of women's groups, U.S. war veterans, families of American servicemen killed or missing in action, and those who have been unable to overcome hard feelings about the past or have been misinformed-continues to demand that the administration maintain its embargo. **POW/MIA** has become a vulnerable [deex toonr thuowng] issue in U.S. society. Against this background, the fabricated, ill-intentioned Russian document is creating a negative impact capable of obstructing the process of normalization of U.S.-Vietnamese relations, especially at this very sensitive juncture.

..TEXT:

The normalization of relations between two nations involved in a war is not easy. It is effected by the political, psychological, and emotional feelings of the two sides involved. Many complex issues caused by the

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war are still heavily preoccupying and causing pain to the American and Vietnamese people alike. But the need to overcome the heavy vestiges of the past in order to set sail into the future regarding relations between the two countries has become an inevitable demand in line with the interests of both sides.

..TEXT:

Proceeding from our understanding of those American families whose sons were killed or missing in action, the government and people of Vietnam have actively helped and cooperated with the United States in solving the **POW/MIA** issue in a spirit of humanitarianism. This has produced satisfactory results. The world at large is welcoming the good-willed and humanitarian attitude and positive actions adopted by the government and people of Vietnam, and the positive trend toward improving U.S.-Vietnamese relations. Many countries, including various Western countries such as France, Japan, Italy, Belgium, Germany, Australia, and Canada, have made positive contributions to this process. Therefore, the release of the fake Russian document at this time is highly suspicious.

..TEXT: