



DEFENSE INTELLIGENCE AGENCY  
WASHINGTON, D.C. 20301-6111

SIGHTING OF ROBERT GARWOOD

PW/MIA AUGMENTATION TEAM REVIEW

DATE: 17 MAR-86

NAME/CASE NUMBER(S): SC

FOLDER REVIEW

- Establish logical order
- Clarify non-self evident notes
- Check with analyst regarding any missing data
- Follow-up required

yes  no

Additional collection required:

MT  MT  POLYGRAPH

Additional production required:

Analysis  Production  Computer Support

- Concur with conclusions

yes  no

COMMENTS:

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TEAM MEMBER: DANDAR THEODORELOS WINSLETT BUTSCHEK

SUBSEQUENT PW/MIS OFFICE ACTION:

DATE: \_\_\_\_\_

|                               | YES                                    | NO                                     | N/A |
|-------------------------------|--|--|-----|
| Contact with sources          |  |  |     |
| Polygraph                     |  |  |     |
| Collection tasked (HUMINT)    | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> MT | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> MT |     |
| Production/Analysis completed |  |  |     |
| No action taken               |  |  |     |

This is one of the scores of reports received by DIA concerning the sprawling system of reeducation camps in Hoang Lien Son Province, northern Vietnam. This camp system, commonly referred to as the Yen Bai reeducation camp, is dispersed in the mountainous region around the town of Yen Bai, about 130 kilometers northeast of Hanoi. The camp system was established circa 1975-1976 and dismantled circa 1978-1979. It was administered by Group 776 of the People's Army of Vietnam as a reeducation system for officers of the former Republic of Vietnam Armed Forces. The camp system was comprised of six groups of camps (called Lien Trai) with about six of 14 camps per group. The inmate population consisted of a few hundred Republic of Vietnam Armed Forces (RVNAF) personnel captured during the war and several thousand RVNAF personnel confined for "reeducation" after the communists seized power in April 1975. Most camps held between 30 and 300 inmates. The site described by Source \_\_\_\_\_ was located within Lien Trai \_\_\_\_\_.

There was a generally effective and accurate flow of information among the inmates of this camp system and many former inmates have provided proven accurate information about it, permitting DIA to identify what it believes are all of the individual camps. The flow of information was facilitated by transfer of inmates and the employment of inmates on work details such as food production, equipment maintenance, distribution of provisions, and provision of medical services to inmates and cadre. Inmates not only had relatively open communication with camp cadre and guards, but also somewhat frequent and easy communication with the local populace.

The effectiveness of this flow of information is evident in the large number of accurate reports, both firsthand and hearsay, concerning one American, former Private Robert Garwood, USMC, who was a low-level member of the camp staff from circa 1975 to early 1979. Mr. Garwood returned to the United States in March 1979. The reports about Mr. Garwood include firsthand accounts by former RVNAF inmates who had spoken with him and hearsay accounts from inmates of camps outside this system. Some of the reports also describe a Thai who lived and worked with Mr. Garwood; although some of the persons who observed the Thai mistakenly believed he was American. The overt racial characteristics of the Thai being similar to those of a Hispanic likely account for descriptions of the American at Yen Bai being of Cuban, Chilean or Venezuelan origin. Most of the reports describe Mr. Garwood as employed as the operator of the electrical generator for the headquarters of Lien Trai I. Others describe Mr. Garwood working at wiring electric poles or showing movies with the aid of a portable generator and projector. According to many inmates he used variations of the name Nguyen Viet Nam, and that he had complete freedom of movement.

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There was a generally effective and accurate flow of information among the inmates of this camp system and many former inmates have provided proven accurate information about it, permitting DIA to identify what it believes are all of the individual camps. The flow of information was facilitated by transfers of inmates and the employment of inmates on work details such as food production, equipment maintenance, distribution of provisions, and provision of medical services to inmates and cadre. Inmates not only had relatively open communication with camp cadre and guards, but also somewhat frequent and easy communication with the local populace.

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Mr. Garwood himself, in his book Conversations With the Enemy, written by Winston Groom, recounted that he lived with a Thai named Son at the Yen Bai camp; that he was employed to operate and maintain the camp's electrical generator and perform other maintenance chores; and that he used variations of the name Nguyen Viet Nam. He also recounted his freedom to travel outside the camp system.

Efforts to make a conclusive judgement whether Mr. Garwood was the only American working at the Yen Bai camp system is complicated by at least three factors. One, Mr. Garwood not only used an alias, but apparently used more than one variation on the alias. Second, he apparently told different inmates different stories about his background. Third, his physical appearance while in the camps was markedly different from his appearance in photos taken after he departed Vietnam; making it difficult for persons who saw him at the camps to make a conclusive identification from photos.

A western official who had frequent contact with Mr. Garwood during the several weeks prior to his departure from Vietnam was shown the photos that were taken moments after Mr. Garwood arrived in Thailand from Vietnam. The official said that it is not surprising that Vietnamese who may have encountered Mr. Garwood did not recognize him from the photos; noting the contrast between the disheveled appearance he sported in Vietnam, and the clean-shaven western-clothed person depicted in the photos.

It is clear, from the large volume of accurate reporting about this camp system, that no Americans were confined in the Yen Bai camps. If Americans had been confined in or near any of these camps, many of the former RVNAF inmates would have learned about them and DIA would have received a volume of corroborative reports similar to those concerning Mr. Garwood.

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