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*Defense
Prisoner Of War /
Missing Personnel
Office*



memorandum

Date: 25 February 2009

To: LC

From: RA-SEA/Millner

Subject: Letter by Thomas Faunce Concerning Alleged Meeting with John H. Robertson

1. On 21 January [redacted] (info@pownetwork.org) forwarded DPMO an email they received from Thomas Faunce (frontlineom@yahoo.com). Mr. Faunce's email was a four-page letter about his meeting with a man he believes is John Hartley Robertson (Refno 1184). [Analyst Note: Mr. Faunce's [redacted] recently relayed Mr. Faunce's story to Analyst, along with photos and a short video clip of "Robertson." Analyst informed [redacted] that the man pictured was interviewed by U.S. personnel in 2006 and admitted he is a Vietnamese citizen named Dang Than Ngoc (aka Dang Tan Ngoc). See Analyst MFR dated 15 January 2009.] (b)(6)

2. In his letter, Mr. Faunce explains that he and his cousin, Joe Faunce, Mr. Faunce's interpreter (Mr. Ratha), along with "Robertson and his son," crossed the border from Vietnam into Cambodia and spent time in a hotel getting to know "Robertson." Mr. Faunce describes the events leading up to his meeting with "Robertson," information he gleaned from "Robertson" and his family, why he believes the man actually is Robertson, and provides some of "Robertson's" history. Mr. Faunce also expresses his opinion that "Robertson" suffers from dementia. Mr. Faunce opines that "we were told by our government that there was not enough creditable evidence on this man (being Robertson). They even asked me for some ID from him...I told them he has been an MIA for nearly forty years, where was he supposed to get ID. They had based their decision as far as we

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know by the interview two years before.” (*Analyst Note: Mr. Faunce is combining two separate incidents. First, the ID reference: [redacted] told Analyst that the U.S. Embassy in Phnom Penh had asked Mr. Faunce and “Robertson” for any paperwork that would identify the man as J. H. Robertson. Second, the interview reference: Analyst had previously informed [redacted] that Dang Than Ngoc had been interviewed by U.S. personnel in 2006.*)

3. On 13 February 2009, in response to phone requests, Thomas Faunce [redacted] (b)(6) [redacted] contacted Analyst. (*Note: Mr. Faunce had apparently been trying to return Analyst’s calls for over a week, but had been using the wrong phone number.*) Mr. Faunce confirmed the information that had been relayed to Analyst by [redacted] and said he was familiar with bogus reporting related to unaccounted-for servicemen. In fact, Mr. Faunce said, he had once turned a man in to the U.S. Embassy (NFI) when that man tried to sell him dog tags and related information. Mr. Faunce also said [redacted] had relayed Analyst’s assessment, including the fact of Mr. Ngoc’s prior admission that he was not really John H. Robertson. However, despite this, Mr. Faunce believes this man really is Robertson and, because of the man’s apparent dementia, what he said during the interview cannot be relied upon. Mr. Faunce also said that his (Mr. Ngoc’s) family claims he was not interviewed two years ago as Analyst maintains. According to Mr. Faunce, the family says that Mr. Ngoc really is Robertson and a man named Kha Tinh has claimed he could help get Mr. Ngoc to the right people so he can return to the U.S.. The family is reportedly angry at Kha Tinh (*who, judging by their description, has apparently been Mr. Ngoc’s handler for several years*) for taking money from them while trying to pass Mr. Ngoc off as SFC Robertson to various people.

5. Mr. Faunce said his interpreter, Ratha, also claims to know of a crash site in Cambodia that was never investigated. Ratha and his grandfather reportedly saw a helicopter crash, possibly in 1971. One soldier was killed in the crash and two or three were dragged away. Mr. Ratha (or his grandfather) found a bronze medal at the site that said “2nd Place.” (*Note: This limited information could not be correlated with any loss incident.*)

6. Analyst again explained that DPMO has seen numerous fabricated reports concerning SFC John H. Robertson, many of which include photos of Dang Than Ngoc who, in Analyst’s opinion, is obviously of Asian descent. Analyst explained that most of the biographic information that accompanies such reporting is false, even though it is supposed to have been written by (or with the help of) Robertson himself. Some reports using the same information have included photos of other

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individuals, besides Mr. Ngoc, who the sources claim are Robertson. Analyst explained again that this man was interviewed in 2006 and he admitted he is a Vietnamese citizen, Dang Than Ngoc, and that he has been used in bogus reporting in the past.

7. Analyst also advised Mr. Faunce that the fingerprints supplied to the U.S. Embassy in Phnom Penh by Mr. Ngoc, with Mr. Faunce's help, had been sent to the FBI for evaluation. The FBI concluded that the Mr. Ngoc's fingerprints do not match SFC Roberson's fingerprints; they are not the same individual. Mr. Faunce still appeared reluctant to accept this verdict.

8. Also on 13 February, Analyst received a call from Joe Faunce [REDACTED] Thomas's cousin. Joe reiterated parts of Thomas' story and mentioned that Mr. Ross Milosevic had "made a connection" for a reporter to cover the meeting with "Robertson." In response to Analyst questions, Joe explained that a reporter, Nelson Rand, was present during part of the time he and his cousin spent with "Robertson." Mr. Rand apparently had serious doubts about the veracity of the man's story. Joe also said that Kha Tinh has been involved with (Mr. Ngoc) for several years. Joe said the family told him they had trusted Kha Tinh, gave him money, and were promised he would help them. The family complained Kha Tinh took "Robertson's" dog tags "a few years back" and has never done anything he said he would. Now the family feels they have wasted a lot of money and they no longer trust Mr. Tinh.

(b)(6)

[Analyst Notes: Ross Milosevic is an Australian Security consultant who, in 2008, contacted POW-MIA Family members warning them about a man he met who was trying to pass bogus information about alleged POWs.

Nelson Rand is a freelance journalist currently living in Bangkok, TH.]

Analyst again explained the history of bogus reporting involving Mr. Ngoc, as well as the FBI fingerprint analysis.

Recommended Action(s): Tech - Update Source File.
DPMO-L – for JPAC/J2

Distro: Chrono, DM, LC, RA, RA-SEA, Rosenau, Millner, Tech, DPMO-L,
McCain (Analyst), Robertson (1184)

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From: P.O.W. Network [redacted] [mailto:info@pownetwork.org]
Sent: Wednesday, January 21, 2009 12:50 PM
To: Greer, Larry, Mr., CIV, OSD-DPMO
Subject: Fwd: The Forgotten Soldier

(b)(6)

Date: Sun, 18 Jan 2009 23:24:34 -0800 (PST)
From: Thomas Faunce <frontlineom@yahoo.com>
Subject: The Forgotten Soldier
To: info@pownetwork.org
X-SpamScore: 0
X-MailHub-Apparently-To: info@pownetwork.org

The Forgotten Soldier

I am sitting here at home after a long and tiresome trip to South East Asia. It is very cold here, subzero temperatures, not like the heat I became accustomed to in South East Asia. This trip has been both a great trial and a challenging test. I have been working in Cambodia and the Vietnam border now for a while. We have been putting wells in villages that are in need of good water. This has given us an open door to minister the gospel to those in need. About a year back I was told by the Cambodia Christians and the Vietnamese that there was an American from the Vietnam war that was still living in the highlands of Vietnam. I, like many veterans, have heard similar stories and took this one with a grain of salt. However, by the next trip there was more interest on their part to let me know of this man; so I did acquire who he was and what his name was. I was given the name: "John Hartley Robertson". I came home and checked into this information and found out that this man was shot down in a helicopter on a mission into Lao. I returned alone to Cambodia to see if I could make any contact. I did meet with some individuals who brought me some photos and information. I was not sure of these men, I felt they were middle men using the situation for their own gain. These men had been contacted by the church members because of the information they had in their possession. However, the church had no dealings with them up until this time. I

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made arrangements for another trip in so that I could meet with John. They told me they could bring him into Cambodia. I agreed and headed back home. My return trip was with my cousin Joe who is from San Antonio, Texas. Joe has gone to many places with me and is a very strong part of the ministry of Frontline Outreach. Joe also was with me on the well projects in this area.

I came into Cambodia a day earlier than Joe and met up with Ratha our friend and interpreter. Joe came in the next day. That same evening we contacted the Vietnamese, they told us we would have to come into Vietnam to meet with John. I was a little discouraged and had a check within my heart about these folks. I felt they were leading us on. The next morning we traveled all the way to the border. When we tried to get into Vietnam we found out we had to go all the way back to Phnom Penh the capital of Cambodia and get our visa. We did not know that they did not give them at the border. To say the least we were discouraged about the delay, however we headed back in hope to get a visa in time and return before ten o'clock evening when the border would close. Our delay seemed to put a damper on the Vietnamese who claimed they had John with them. They told us John and his family who had not been out of the village for many years were getting scared and wanted to return. We encouraged them to wait for us. This situation seemed tense. I felt within that these men were leading us away from where we needed to go. We did make it back to the border before it shut down. It was late evening before we were in Vietnam. The men told us that they had to leave Saigon and go another way, because Johns family was scared. By this time I knew within we were being mislead into something, we did not know. I was a little irate at this time and told our friend the Cambodian pastor that we needed to change direction. While in Vietnam, the pastor found he had a number to reach John's son by cell phone. He called, found out that they were not with the men who had set up the meeting and that they knew nothing of our meeting in Saigon. We realized we were being set up for a rip-off. We decided to head up to the central high lands where the village was, the place in which the American reportedly had been in. The pastor from Cambodia has met with John and knew exactly where we should go. We ended up in a town up in the hills close to the village. By this time it was early morning. We were informed that they were fearful up in the village of any foreigners coming there, so we decided to wait in town for John and his son to come and meet us. It was not long after that a motorcycle pulled up to where we were staying. It was John and his son. The first time he saw us he came up and hugged us and started weeping. They told us before hand that his mind was not right. He could hardly speak any language. I soon found out that this man who in my heart I believe is John Harlley had a real problem mentally. I do not know what happened the day he was shot down, however knowing war, I knew it had to be very traumatic. I found out from his son that he had been this way as long as he remembered. I was told that when he is at ease that his mind worked better, He showed us his gut wound from the day he was shot down. I do not know how he escaped, except that somehow he was found and stayed in some Buddhist sanctuary for a while in Lao. What we gathered is that he had tried to escape back into Vietnam to reach a US military outpost to try and return home. They informed us that he and some other Vietnamese encountered a battle. They were on a river in a boat and again had to escape for their lives. It is at this time how he met his now wife. They have been up in the hills ever since.

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We persuaded John to return to Cambodia with us so that we could try and see what we could do to see that he could return to the United States. His family was very hesitant to let him go. We found out that two years back he was taken across the border and locked in a room until he was interviewed. They said that his life was in jeopardy by the Vietnamese who took him across if he did not agree to stay. He did escape from them and returned to the hills. I met with his daughter Twee, who was deeply concerned for her father. You could see in her face a fear and sadness of what was ahead for her dad. I thought of my daughters and how they would respond to such an arrangement. John told us over and over he wanted to return to America, that he was an American Soldier. He also pointed to his son and daughter in regard to their safety and possibility of them going with him. Truly this is a man caught in two worlds. They agreed to let John go with us accompanied by his son. When we arrived at the border, Joe and I crossed separately. The Vietnamese and Cambodians crossed at another location in which there's no questions asked for a price. I will not disclose much more details on this, for the sake of those involved. We arrived in Phnom Penh at the hotel we often stay at. I was looking forward to what was ahead, but never expected the disinterest we encountered.

The days we spent with John have been one of joy and sadness. I see in this man a real struggle to find his way out, a prisoner of his own mind and circumstances. We sat and reminisced with him as best as we could, and seen him respond to only things most Americans recognize. He even played tic-tac-toe with Joe. We did go to the embassy with him. On the day we arrived, as he walked down the sidewalk to the entrance, behind Joe and I. Joe happened to turn around and was caught off guard by the sight before him. John stopped and was looking up at the American flag with tears in his eyes and than proceeded to salute the flag in a military fashion. He did not know anyone took notice, but we did, it was a sight to see. In his child like mind he mentioned to us Texas, and San Antonio, a place he seemed to know about. One afternoon he pointed to my hat that is similar to a cowboy style and mentioned Mexico and Indians. There were so many little things, his gestures, his politeness. When there was a woman ready to be seated he would get up and offer his seat. His whistle, his stand, his response to things that were recognizable by any American but not custom at all to the Vietnamese. It is hard to explain on paper how to describe this person. John is close to eighty years old. His oldest son is going to be thirty-five. He too is at least six foot tall, though he has more of the Vietnamese features. His daughter Twee on the other hand is more of the Caucasian side of the family. These must be taken into consideration. There is too much at stake to just right this man off. I do not understand how we can, justify not following through on this man. In the military we were taught to leave no one behind, a band of brothers watching out for one another. I do not believe there is a Veteran in this country who would not want to see this followed through on a much greater scale than what has been done. With all this information out, I fear for this mans life.

We were told by our government that there was not enough creditable evidence on this man. They even asked me for some ID from him. I could not understand such a question. I told them he has been an MIA for nearly forty years, where was he supposed to get ID. They had

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based their decision as far as we know by the interview two years before. You cannot interview a man with dementia and come up with any solid conclusion. However, this is what seems to be the basis of them not following through on this man. I was to say the least shocked by the coldness and lack of interest.

This story is hard to believe and put together, however we have a man who is clearly not of Vietnamese decent lost in a village for all these years, wanting to come out and find out who he really is. He told us by what means he could, that he knows he is John Hartley. Before I came I did contact a fellow soldier and friend of his that did recognize John's photo and said that he was very sure that this man was John. This gave me the encouragement and stamina to press on to find this man. As a Christian and a Veteran I know the importance of the value of one life. I could not just turn away from this because of the difficulties or the lack of evidence. I have been criticized. Some saying I was loosing my perspective. As a Christian in missions the gospel must be first and above all. This I agree with. I cannot help feel that the reaching out to any life is the gospel in action. It is so much more than passing out booklets and bibles, but love in action. How can we turn any one away even at the chance of being foolish to find out the truth?

The frigid cold and Arctic air outside are a reminder of how this all has been handled by our government. As a Vietnam Veteran I find it very hard to accept such apathy in regard to a human life that is very possibly John Hartley Robertson. As I travel this country I have seen the flags, bumper stickers, and signs in remembrance of our POWs, and MIAs. However, it now seems that if one is located that there is not much in remembrance or caring. We will go and dig up the bones at crash sites, but we dare not say one is alive. The Vietnamese government has already stated years back there is no live MIAs. This seems to have closed the books on it. If this is how our government handles such information than truly there are no MIAs, they are all KIAs, because they have already been written off. Regardless of who this man is, there needs to be more than what has been done to prove his identity. More than government officials checking into it, but an independent study from those who have nothing to gain or loose. We spend so much in weapons to take lives why is it we cannot spend just a little to try and save a life of a possible Veteran and by all rights an American hero? We owe all Veterans this right. God help us if we have lost the moral backbone to do the right thing.

By this we know love, because He laid down His life for us. And we also ought to lay down our lives for the brethren. (1 John 3:16 NKJV)

In Christ service
T.M. Faunce

Taking The Word To The hearts Of Men: Acts 1:8

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