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MEMORANDUM

TO: Bill

FROM: Bob T.

DATE: 5 December 1991

SUBJECT: Post 73/75 Military Operations - Don Gordon

1 On 5 December, I spoke by phone with Mr. Don Gordon, former J-2 (Intelligence Officer) for the Joint Special Operations Command (JSOC) in 1981. JSOC was then, and still is today, the joint (inter-service) command authority for special operations units such as Delta (Army) and Seal Team-Six (Navy). As the J-2 of JSOC, Mr. Gordon was involved in planning for the 1981 Nhom Marrot operation. He recounted the following:

2 In early 1981, around January, JSOC had been alerted to a possible rescue attempt in Laos for American POWs and had formed a small team to begin planning. It was obvious that the higher levels in the Pentagon had sensitive intelligence and that they wanted time to evaluate it. He recalled that at some point they obtained overhead photography of the suspect camp, showing what was interpreted to be a "52" stompd into the grass nearby. He recalled this created speculation that this might be a signal from POWs, perhaps associated with the POW tap code, a Rivet Joint collection aircraft that was lost in Laos, or a B-52 crew. They also had conflicting intelligence that this might be a Vietnamese Army camp.

3 By April, the Pacific Command was actively involved in planning and a 10-15 man PACOM planning team was working with JSOC. Gordon also recalled a special KH satellite mission being tasked to collect on the suspect camp. A scale model of the camp was constructed at the Navy Yard and brought down to Fort Bragg where a "facsimile" model was made. He specifically recalled that overhead photography could make out what was written on a large sign over the entrance of the camp. He thought it said something in Laotian like "Through your labors, you will be free."

4 Gordon remembered that an interagency meeting was held in April JSOC, JCS, CIA, and NSA attended. The commander of JSOC, told his CIA : he "wanted round eyes to look at was mounted. Gordon could not remember the CIA official, but said he was high

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5 In fact, General Scholts had first argued that Delta should perform the recon. However, when CIA insisted it had jurisdiction over the recon, and that it be done with non-U.S. personnel, Scholts demanded that the team have at least one American. CIA agreed they would have an American accompany the team. Gordon recalled it was a Marine Corp officer working for the Agency, although he did not have his name. As far as he knows, he led the team but cannot confirm it. CIA left the meeting saying it would take 6-8 weeks to prepare for the mission.

6 Gordon described the CIA run mission as ineptly organized and ill-equipped. He recalls that they were equipped with a World-War II era radio. He stated they had no Direction Finding (DF) equipment.

7 He thought the mission was over by June, but received little feed-back on the results. He learned they had observed the camp for two hours, or two days, depending on "who you talk to" and took photographs, which reportedly contained no indication of Americans. When he asked to see the pictures, he said he was refused. He said the operation essentially ended there, and remembered being surprised at how fast interest dropped.

8 Gordon also provided a number of names of individuals involved in various aspects of the 1981 operation. We will pursue those leads, especially General Scholts and other participants of the April interagency meeting.