

Stenographic Transcript of
HEARINGS
Before the

SELECT COMMITTEE ON POW/MIA AFFAIRS

UNITED STATES SENATE

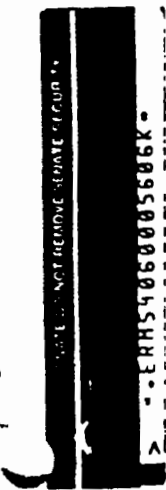
DEPOSITION OF RICHARD V. SECORD
(MAJ. GEN. (Ret.) USAF)

Wednesday, June 10, 1992
Exhibits 1-4 attached
Pages 1-148

Washington, D.C.

ALDERSON REPORTING COMPANY
1111 14TH STREET, N.W.
WASHINGTON, D.C. 20005-5650
(202) 289-2260

RECORDED AT THE NATIONAL ARCHIVE



Eah, 23-11

1 experience and what it entailed?

2 A. I was experienced in the review of intelligence
3 reports beginning in 1962, in my first tour in Vietnam, with
4 what came to be known as U.S. Air Force Special Operations
5 Forces; and during assignments elsewhere with U.S. Special
6 Operations forces in the 1960's;

7

8 Q. What types of intelligence reports were you
9 reviewing? I mean, on what subjects?

10 A. Virtually all that I could think of were related
11 to the war in Southeast Asia or the various conflicts we
12 were dealing with elsewhere in the world, insurgencies.

13 Q. Before the time that you joined the Pentagon in
14 1972, did you have any experience or training in the subject
15 of casualty accounting or accounting for lost personnel?

16 A. No.

17 Q. None of the intelligence reports that you had ever
18 reviewed, either as a detailee at the CIA or in any other
19 position, referred to prisoners of war or men who were
20 missing in action?

21 A. Oh, many, constantly.

22 You're earlier question was did I have any
23 training in the subject of insurgency.

24 Q. Oh, I'm sorry. I thought I'd asked you whether
25 you had any training or experience.

1 a bunch of experts. God save me from experts when they send
2 them from Headquarters in time of war.

3 We spent quite a bit of time, some weeks,
4 analyzing this, that, and the other area. They even built a
5 big model, plastic model, back at Headquarters, of the so-
6 called, the POW site.

7 Then it was decided that we ought to try and have
8 a hi-op first, ~~METHOD~~

9 ~~METHOD~~ -----

10 There was great fear that there would be -- you know, I may
11 sound critical, but these are always delicate, difficult,
12 judgment calls, tactical calls that you had to make. You
13 might decide to do it one way and I might decide to do it a
14 different way. It was decided by higher authority to

15 attempt ~~METHOD~~ Udorn opposed that.

16 But there was great fear that one or more of the prisoners
17 would be killed in our raid. That's always a concern.

18 Something went awry and the camp went dead on us.

19 Photography showed very quickly ~~METHOD~~

20 ~~METHOD~~ that it was no longer active. We sent
21 some people there and it was gone.

22 These three were never repatriated.

23 Q. They did not come back at Homecoming?

24 A. They did not. I remember checking that one out.

25 Q. Were they under Pathet Lao control, do you

RECORDED AT THE NATIONAL ARCHIVE

1 that troubles me as an analyst, and that is the issue of
2 correlation. At some point in this problem, as I've
3 described it to you, this becomes a long-term problem, and a
4 white man in a jungle is an anomaly who has no face and no
5 name for any practical purposes, or he may have a Lao name,
6 or a Vietnamese name.

7 [Discussion off the record.]

8 BY MR. McCREARY (Resuming):

9 Q. Have you followed what I was driving at so far?

10 A. Sure.

11 Q. Were any operations ever conducted to try to --
12 let me rephrase that.

13 Was it always necessary to have identified the
14 loss before an operation, to have identified the person in a
15 karst or in a cave to begin planning an operation for a
16 rescue?

17 A. We did not have any dedicated rescue team. I'm
18 referring only to CIA now.

19 Q. I understand that. Let me rephrase.

20 If you had had what you consider reliable
21 reporting of Americans kept in Mahaxay, in Laos --

22 A. We did, as a matter of fact.

23 Q. -- but you didn't know their names, but you were
24 90 percent sure they were American pilots, would you
25 consider a raid to rescue them, based on that information?

1 A. Not only would we, we did launch a raid.

2 Q. Would you amplify, please, and give me the year?

3 A. I think it was late 1967. It could have been
4 early 1968. They all run together. It's a long time ago.

5 Q. I understand, and I'm not holding you to any
6 precision. But the details interest me.

7 A. We thought we knew for a long time -- and you're
8 an intelligence person, so you know, you think you know
9 certain things. Sometimes you find out what you thought you
10 knew was not quite as factual as you thought it was. Like
11 they say, you never know what you don't know. But we
12 thought we knew with fair degree of, high degree of
13 probability, that there was a significant POW camp or
14 holding point near the Ho Chi Minh Trail in the vicinity of
15 Mahaxay, as I recall, but to be more particular, it was
16 north of Route 912 and east of 96, near, not to far from,
17 you know, between Mugia Pass and Bankarai Pass. It was
18 logical there would be such a facility, since a lot of
19 pilots were shot down over the Ho Chi Minh Train, more than
20 over North Vietnam, I believe, or at least as many.

21 We had all kinds of reports, but we could never
22 identify it in photography. We couldn't pin it down with
23 other means. But we had a big, you know, we didn't need a
24 map. Everybody had it in their minds. This was a
25 cautionary area that we needed to not forget.