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THE SECRETARY OF DEFENSE
WASHINGTON, D.C. 20301

17 NOV 1972

MEMORANDUM FOR THE PRESIDENT

SUBJECT: Information Obtained from the Debriefing of the Recently
Returned Three U.S. Prisoners of War

We have just completed our debriefings of the three U.S. prisoners of war who were repatriated by the North Vietnamese this past September. Intelligence analysts have prepared a report summarizing the conditions under which our men are being held in North Vietnam. I believe the information in this report will be of interest to you.

The three returnees arrived in the United States on 28 September. Major Edward K. Elias was piloting an RF-4C reconnaissance jet when shot down on 20 April 1972. He evaded three days prior to his capture. Lt(JG) Norris A. Charles was shot down over North Vietnam on 30 December 1971. Lt Markam L. Gartley was the pilot of a Navy F-4 fighter when downed on 17 August 1968. At their request, debriefings of the three men began almost immediately. They were eager to provide the names of those men they left behind in North Vietnam.

The returnees provided the names of approximately 350 prisoners of war being held in North Vietnam, most of whom had previously been known.

When the three returnees were taken from their camps in September 1972, the estimated PW camp population in North Vietnam was as follows: CU LOC (Hanoi), 25 PW's; HA LO (Hanoi), 125 PW's and another 220 PW's at undetermined locations (Attachments A, B, and C).

Most of the information on treatment of prisoners was obtained from Lt Gartley, who had been a PW for forty-nine months. Much of his information was related to him second or third hand from fellow prisoners. He reported that in the years prior to 1969, physical mistreatment of the prisoners was widespread. Handcuffs and leg irons were commonly used, and the prisoners were subject to beatings with bamboo poles, rubber whips, or fists. Other torture methods included long periods of solitary confinement.

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By MO NARA, Date 1/13/94 10/28/93

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In 1969 a shift in the treatment policy became evident, and lower ranking North Vietnamese lost the authority to inflict physical punishment or torture on the prisoners. The authority to subject the prisoners to physical punishment was restricted to the camp commander.

Since the spring of 1971, the quantity and quality of the daily diet improved and the prisoners for the first time began receiving certain foods (milk, fish, fruit, and occasionally meat) regularly. While noting several exceptions, Lt Gartley described the general health of the prisoners as satisfactory. Exercise periods became more frequent and some recreational activities such as volleyball and basketball were permitted. More reading material is now available and is less anti-war in nature than prior to 1971.

The returnees reported that treatment for injuries is often withheld to force compliance or signed statements. The following two cases illustrate this. During 1965 and 1966 Major Fred V. Cherry, USAF, under pressure to support the American Black Power Movement, was denied treatment for his dislocated shoulder and was unmercifully beaten for his refusal to cooperate. In April 1972, Lt Thomas D. Latrendresse, USAF, was injured during ejection. The Vietnamese withheld post operative treatment and allowed his condition to deteriorate in order to coerce his cell group into signing a propaganda statement.

The prisoners have organized themselves into a unit called the "Fourth Allied POW Wing." The structure is based on military rank and Wing policies are widely known among the prisoners. The North Vietnamese tacitly acknowledge the existence of differences in rank among the prisoners. The seniority within the Wing is based on shutdown date of rank, with modification for long term prisoners. Those pilots downed before December 1971 are referred to as "old timers." Those shot down subsequent to that time are referred to as "new guys." At one time during 1970-71, most prisoners were consolidated in one camp. During this period of time the prisoners drafted a complete set of camp policies. These policies are disseminated to all recently captured pilots when contact is made with them. In some cases, this has been difficult, since the North Vietnamese restrict the amount of contact between the new and old prisoners.

The three returnees have completed their formal debriefings and are presently on leave. Lt(JG) Charles is on a 45-day leave in the San Diego area. Lt Gartley is hunting and fishing in Maine. Major Elias is on leave in Valdosta, Georgia and will enter Armed Forces Staff College in January 1973.

Attachments

as

SUMMARY OF THE PW CAMP SITUATION
AUGUST 1969 - SEPTEMBER 1972

1. From August 1969 to the summer of 1970, the PW camp situation remained stable. Although a small number of prisoners were moved among the camps, there were no major shifts of populations, nor were any camps opened or closed. The camps open at this time were: Citadel, Cu Loc, Ha Lo, and Son Tay.

2. From the summer of 1970 to late November 1970, there was a major consolidation of the prisoners at a new PW camp: Dan Hoi, located 9 miles west of Hanoi. The Citadel and Son Tay camps were closed and their populations were transferred to Dan Hoi. About 120 of the 190 prisoners at Cu Loc were also moved to Dan Hoi. By November 1970, about 220 prisoners were held at Dan Hoi. With this concentration at Dan Hoi, only 2 other camps remained opened, Cu Loc (About 70 prisoners) and Ha Lo (about 50 prisoners).

3. Two days after the 21 November 1970 SAR at Son Tay, all prisoners at Dan Hoi were moved to Ha Lo for security reasons. The population of Ha Lo increased to about 270.

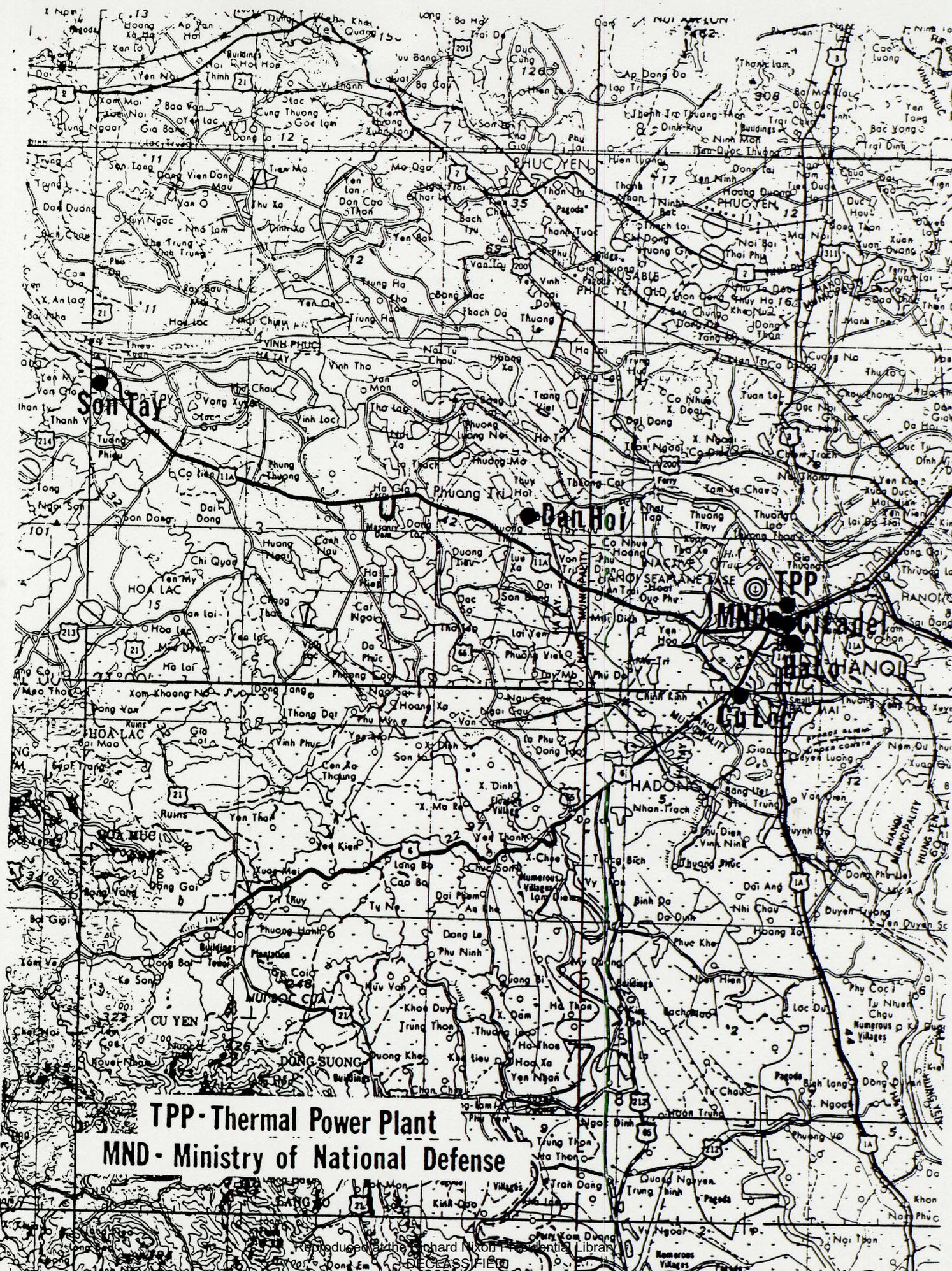
The 70 prisoners at Cu Loc were not moved immediately to Ha Lo. These men remained at Cu Loc to be photographed during the 1970 Christmas season. After the Christmas photography was completed, Cu Loc was closed and the prisoners were moved to Ha Lo. The population of Ha Lo in January 1971 was about 340.

4. In 1971 2 small groups of men were moved temporarily from Ha Lo to "Camp Charlie Victor" and were subsequently returned to Ha Lo. "Camp Charlie Victor" was a punishment camp believed to be located near Hanoi. This camp has not been located on aerial photography. Lt Gartley was never at this camp and has only limited information about it.

5. In September 1971 the North Vietnamese reopened the Cu Loc camp. About 85 prisoners were transferred from Ha Lo to Cu Loc. The majority of the acknowledged prisoners remained in Ha Lo.

6. From December 1971 to April 1972 the population of Cu Loc gradually increased because of an influx of recently captured pilots. About 110 prisoners were held in Cu Loc in March 1972. In April, 70 prisoners were transferred from Cu Loc to Ha Lo. After this transfer, Cu Loc became primarily a camp for recently captured pilots.

7. With the influx of the 70 prisoners from Cu Loc, the population of Ha Lo in April 1972 was 330. In May 220 were moved out of Ha Lo to an unknown location.



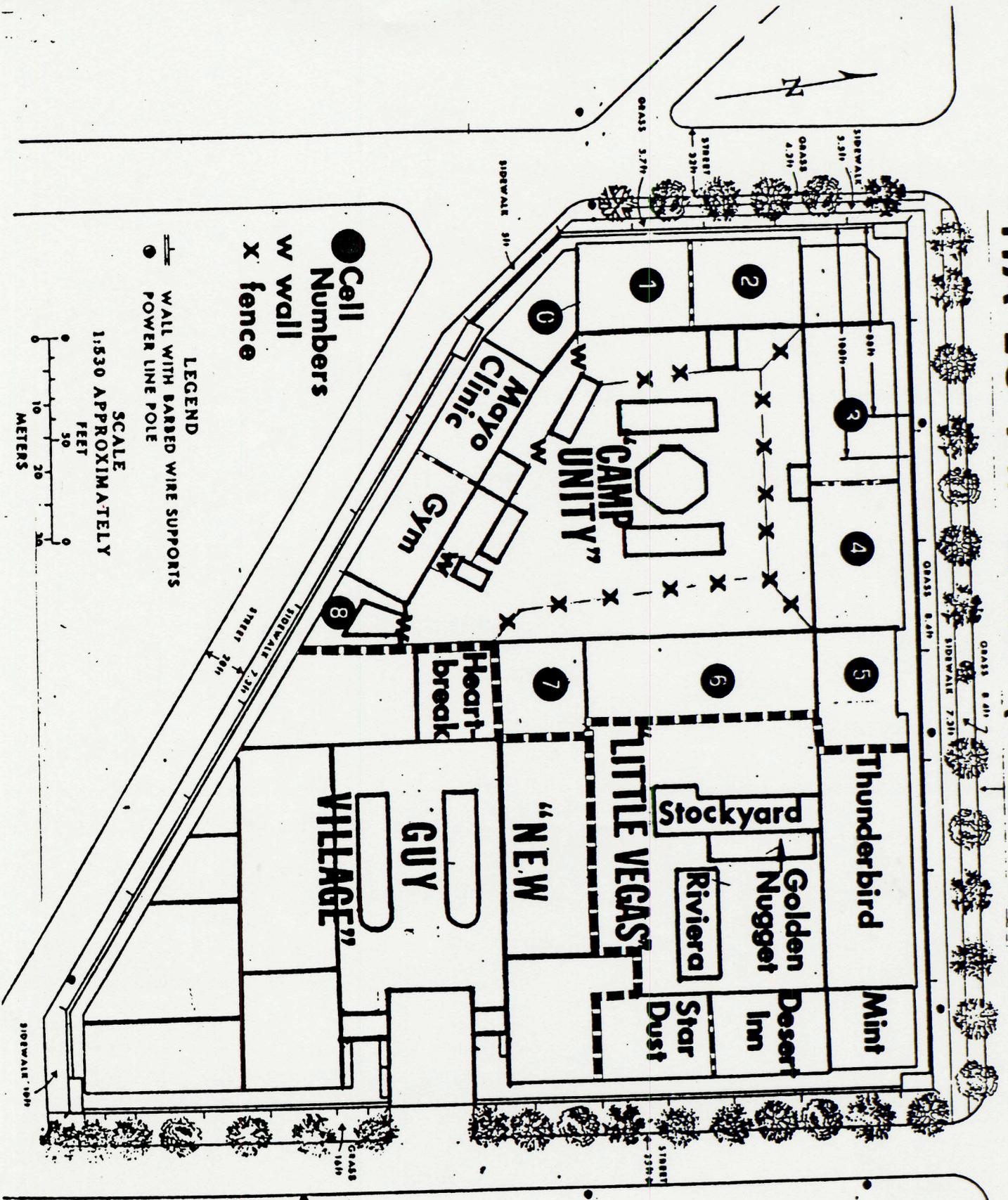
TPP - Thermal Power Plant
MND - Ministry of National Defense

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HA LO PW CAMP (HAINUI)



● Cell Numbers
 w wall
 x fence

LEGEND
 ○ WALL WITH BARBED WIRE SUPPORTS
 ● POWER LINE POLE

SCALE
 1:530 APPROXIMATELY
 FEET
 METERS