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DEPARTMENT OF THE AIR FORCE

JOINT SERVICES SERE AGENCY
FT BELVOIR, VIRGINIA 22060-5784



29 JUN 1992

DD

Analysis of 22 Jan 88 "USA" Photo (CDO Ltr, 23 Jun 92)

DIA POW/MIA and Central Documentation Office

1. (U) JSSA has reviewed the January 1988 "USA" photo and all Vietnam era training and policy guidance related to use of E&E code letters by downed aircrew personnel. We offer the following.

2. (U) Background:

a. (U) Evasion and Escape (E&E) code letters were used in SEA to assist downed aircrew personnel in communicating their survival and location on the ground at potential recovery sites. As part of an aviator's pre-mission briefing, he was given a primary and a backup E&E letter. Prior to Oct 71, the primary letter, used for near-term operations, was changed monthly for security reasons while the backup (a letter [redacted]) never changed and was to be used in long-term evasion, POW or escapee situations. After Oct 71, aviators were given a primary letter [redacted] for near-term use and a backup letter [redacted] for long-term operations. Both primary and backup letters for this timeframe were simultaneously changed periodically for security [redacted]. See attachment 1 for example guidance.

b. (U) Instruction to fliers in making ground signals was quite specific as to size but somewhat less definitive concerning construction, since the method of making the signal would depend on environment and materials available. No methods or materials that could create the required contrast were ruled out.

c. (U) A "K" [redacted] was the primary signal for [redacted]. From [redacted] up to the time the USG left SEA, the primary signal was a [redacted] "Y" (champagne glass) with a [redacted] "K" as backup.

WALKING

3. (U) The Jan 88 photo reveals two possible signals, a "K" and "USA". The "USA" appears to be the more recently made of the two. The "K" appears to have faded by time and possibly by human activity or the removal of materials which made the signal more visible.

4. (U) The "K" appears to be made in a marshalling area where [redacted] the [redacted] for transport. If an American crewmember were living in this area

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and part of a labor force working these [REDACTED] and was part of the [REDACTED], he definitely could have made a "K" in the marshalling area by repeatedly walking the same path and ensuring he stacked [REDACTED] where he needed them to create a "K".

5. (U) [REDACTED] If the crewmember happened to become frustrated after having received no response to his "K" signal, it is reasonable to expect him to make progressively more blatant signals, including a "USA". In 1966 Lt Dieter Dengler, US Navy, who was captured and later escaped used a ground signal "SOS" in LAOS which led to his recovery.

6. (U) While some may consider it unwise to use blatant signals, history has shown that sometimes such signals are the only ones that get the appropriate attention. Many times in SEA, obviously American yet unacceptable authentication procedures worked well. If the ground signal is wisely made in the right environment where the people are not well educated and are unaware of what high fliers can pick up, the captors will not look for or see the signal, even when it's "under their noses." In such cases, it is almost impossible to get caught. For a missing crewmember, motivation to communicate is strong. If it works, he goes home.

7. (U) [REDACTED] Some believe the "K" could be a "34" [REDACTED] JSSA is not convinced of this interpretation. Are all or some of the area's [REDACTED] marked in a similar fashion? According to our interpretation, the "34" is improperly oriented [REDACTED] it is facing away from the [REDACTED] instead of towards it.

8. (U) [REDACTED] JSSA position:

a. (U) [REDACTED] The "K" and the "USA" should be considered valid ground signals until proven otherwise. [REDACTED] The "K" was made before the "USA", possibly during the [REDACTED] phase with the construction technique unknown. The use of shuffled feet, [REDACTED] or stacked [REDACTED] are possible methods/materials. [REDACTED] stacked and then removed, could leave a faint mark on surface that might be visible for sometime afterwards.

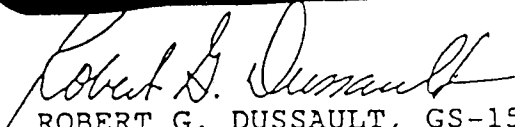
b. (U) After the [REDACTED] and removed from the fields, straw would be removed and eventually the stubble burned. The fields would then receive very little attention. Poor people in Southeast Asia and many areas of the world are allowed to go into the fields to glean grain dropped by the harvesters. Any prisoners allowed to look for [REDACTED] a harvest would likely have ample opportunity to scrape "USA" into the soil. The soil is soft [REDACTED] fields and easy to work. Clumps [REDACTED] stubble can be hand pulled and the soil could be easily kicked into a signal.

9. (U) According to DIA's roster, the following individuals currently unaccounted for went down during the "K" [REDACTED]: W2 Jack W. Brunson and Capt Clinton A. Musil, both downed on 31 May

71; and civilians Rawlings (C-123, Jan 75), Dolan, Miller and Seidl (all DC-4 in Mar 75).

(U)
10. [REDACTED] Another possibility is this: The person on the ground could be attempting to communicate that "K" equals "USA" or "American". This is close to "KY" which is short for "American" (Hoa Ky). If "K" is being used for "American", another interpretation can be derived from previously observed signals, e.g., "52K" or "52 Americans". According to some, "K" has been seen in many different contexts and environments, including "the three Amigos photo" "NNTK". With this possible interpretation in mind, the "NNTK" could be "something something American(s)." In cases like this where we cannot talk to our communicator, certainty never exits.

11. (U) Although it is possible someone other than an American being held against his will could have made these signals, JSSA believes these signals must be considered valid until we know otherwise.


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2 Atchs
1. PACOM E&E Extract
2. Rice Harvest Photo

Info: AF/XOO

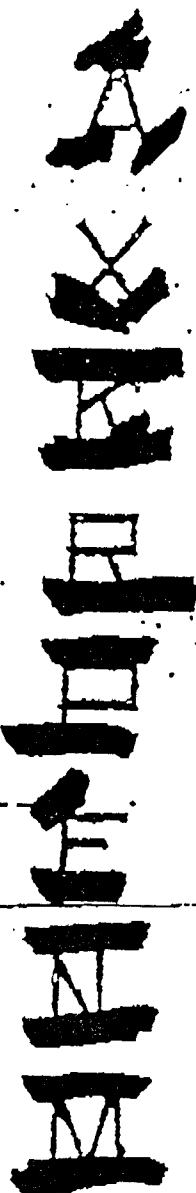
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BACK-UP E&E CODE LETTERS

LETTER

IDENTIFICATION

USED FROM
(DATE/DATE)



FOOT
↑

[REDACTED] ALPHA

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED] XRAY

[REDACTED]

WALKING
[REDACTED] KILO

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED] ROMEO

/

[REDACTED] PAPA

/

[REDACTED] FOXTROT

/

[REDACTED] NOVEMBER

/

[REDACTED] MIKE

/

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