

COMMITTEE CONFIDENTIAL

Stenographic Transcript of
DEPOSITION
Before the

SELECT COMMITTEE ON POW/MIA AFFAIRS

UNITED STATES SENATE

DEPOSITION OF ERNEST P. LaBOUNTY

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ALDERSON REPORTING COMPANY
1111 14TH STREET, N.W.
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(202) 289-2260

1 sides.

2 Q. A guard hut? Is it a defensive preparation of some
3 kind?

4 A. It was defensive at one time. But know, they were
5 on top of it is where they would stay.

6 Okay. At this time now, which was whatever date --
7 between the 15th and the 20th. I was driving with my driver.
8 And the driver, we would come up to this village and I told
9 him, I said, well, we have to go about 10 more kilometers up
10 here. And we'll work from north to south.

11 We went over the bridge about -- I've got it written
12 here -- about 250 meters over the bridge, on the right, there
13 was an open area. There's some shops, which they called a
14 tulot, a marketing area.

15 And as we came by there, I happened to glance over
16 to my right and over there I saw an individual -- he had to be
17 6 foot or more. And I could tell by the guards. I know in
18 that report it says 5. I'm not certain how many guards there
19 were, to be sure. The one you have from June, it says five.
20 I don't know if it's two, three, four, five. I can't really
21 be certain. I don't know where the number five came from.

22 But there was at least two guards walking behind him
23 with AK-47's and I noticed those just because you're used to
24 them. The man had his head slumped over, his shoulders
25 slumped over. And you could tell by the average size of a Lao

1 how large he was. He was probably 35, 25, 35 meters from me.

2 And I hollered out over to him. And my driver would
3 not even acknowledge the fact that there was a human being to
4 the right of me. He would not say anything. I said, stop
5 this vehicle. And he wouldn't say anything. He just kept
6 going. He just never even looked off from one side to the
7 other.

8 I knew he was a policeman and the reason was
9 obvious. The thing that brought it to my attention is the man
10 walking there. Of course, he had short hair. Now, he was a
11 healthy looking person. He wasn't someone you would think
12 that was really skinny. But he had a hangman's noose around
13 his neck with about a 1 inch hemp rope hanging down his back
14 and dragging on the ground with the guards walking behind him.

15 When I hollered, he never even looked over my way.
16 Now, I don't know if he heard me or not, because there was a
17 crowd of people in that area.

18 Okay. I kept trying to get my driver to stop and he
19 wouldn't do it. We drove up about another kilometer or two,
20 then he would turn around. I told him I had to go to market
21 and buy something. We came back and at that time, the
22 individual was gone.

23 I probably saw him for 30, 45 seconds as I was
24 driving by. I had doubts in my mind. I said there can't
25 possibly be -- you know how you do? But then you start

1 thinking about it, thinking about it, okay?

2 To jump way ahead a year now -- I will for one
3 moment -- I sent my friend, whose name I won't use, up to
4 check on that. And this is what reports you'll be getting
5 next time if it ever comes here that he had went to this
6 village and had asked around. Of course, no one would answer
7 anything. He had relatives there that eventually told him
8 yes, there was American or is American prisoner of war that
9 has been seen.

10 Q. Let me stop you right there. When did your friend
11 go back?

12 A. October.

13 Q. '92?

14 A. '92.

15 Q. And he went back to this village?

16 A. Yes.

17 Q. He had friends or relatives in that village?

18 A. Yes. He wouldn't tell me who. He wouldn't tell me.
19 And for the obvious reason, he has that fear. He went back
20 there. He was told -- and last year, we had another problem.
21 To back up -- I have to make the story click all together.
22 Last year, we tried to build a camp in that village. They
23 refused to let us. We had several Thai people that worked
24 with us. The Thai people went and gave the military a hard
25 time. There's a military camp in that town and they were told

1 That was my main concern.

2 I went back there this year after trying all kinds
3 of things to get our help, anyway, from here in the United
4 States, which I have completely given up with, so I had him go
5 and do it. He went up there, verified what I knew is true, I
6 just couldn't believe it.

7 Q. Okay, I need you to walk me through. What do you
8 mean by verified, exactly? What do you mean?

9 A. Okay. He went back to the village, okay? He had
10 talked -- I'm going to bounce back and forth on you now, okay?
11 He had went and talked to the Thai guys from last year because
12 of the problem they had trying to set up a base camp there.
13 Every 2 or 3 days we moved, so we'd set up tents or something
14 in the village. And there was 100 of us. They refused to let
15 us set up in that town.

16 That, I told him about that. He went and checked on
17 it. He went back to the village, itself. Now, this is a man
18 who's volunteered to do anything to help me do anything in
19 Laos as far as getting them out of there, other places he
20 knows about, anything. He would do anything to help them get
21 out.

22 This man knows things that I've said to him. He
23 knows I've contacted the CIA, the DIA, whatever it may be, to
24 no avail, okay? He went and checked on his own, was
25 discouraged from staying in that town by some of the people.