



Operation Ivory Coast: A. K. A. The Son Tay Raid: A Short Briefing

Tom Davis

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Operation Ivory Coast AKA The Son Tay Raid was a rescue mission conducted on 21 November 1970 to free 61 US prisoners held by the North Vietnamese in the Son Tay prisoner-of-war camp. The North Vietnamese government held sixty-one American service men. This joint Army/Air Force operation was commanded by Col Arthur D. "Bull" Simons. He and his 56 Army Special Forces soldiers conducted this daring operation only 23 miles west of Hanoi, North Vietnam.

There has been relatively little written about this operation. Probably the best book on it is *Son Tay Raid: American POWs in Vietnam Were Not Forgotten* by John Gargus.

In 1990-1991 I served as the J3 (Operations Officer on a Joint Staff) of the Special Operations Command Korea (SOC-K). One day my Army Plans officer walked into my office. The following is an excerpt from my memoir, *The Most Fun I Ever Had With My Clothes On: A March From Private to Colonel*. See www.oldmp.com/davismemoirs

One day while I was sitting in my office out at the ROK Special Forces compound, MAJ Bates, my Army plans officer, poked his head in my door. "Sir, got a minute?"

I motioned for him to come in and sit.

He was too excited to even consider sitting. Instead, he rushed over and handed me several sheets of paper stapled together. "You're not going to believe what I just found in the back of a drawer in my classified file cabinet. It's a briefing. No author noted. Not even a classification. If it's true, its gotta be Top Secret."

I began flipping through the papers. The first page simply read, RADE; the next, MISSION. The following page listed the OBJECTIVES: Hanoi City, Hoa Lo Prison, Son Tay Prison, CAS Site #39 Laos, Haiphong Harbor. I continued flipping pages until I got to ASSETS.

Bates, standing beside me, stabbed the list of four named Americans with his finger. They were credited as to have:

-Confirmed information on prisoners

and

-Identified 9 out of 13 prisoner of war camp locations.

Stunned, I sat back in my chair. I recognized all four names, but one flew out at me like a witch on a broom. If I were to believe what I was reading, which I did not, and it were to get out, it would cause a paradigm shift for all of us Vietnam era veterans.

This eBook is the entire briefing on "The Raid" written by an unknown author. At the end of this short briefing, the author included handwritten notes. They are included. It had no classification. I can only guess that the author of the briefing may have been COL Bob Howard. Howard was the SOC-K commander that the current commander, COL Dan Edwards, replaced. He was a Medal of Honor winner from Vietnam, and is the only person I know who was assigned to SOC-K who may have had first hand knowledge of the raid. The details of the raid found in the briefing were too specific for it to have been written by anyone other than someone intimately familiar with the operation.

Remember. This was in 1991. We found the briefing in the back of a file cabinet, in the US section of a bunker on the Korean Special Forces compound. This was a VERY secure location. The 20 years required for declassification had expired only one year ago. At the time, there was little if anything in the public domain about this operation. There was no Internet or World Wide Web to disseminate information like there is today. The only thing that caused me pause in the believability of the briefing was the list of assets and the contribution of the four named Americans. One in particular. I offer this eBook to you to make your own determination. Regardless, the details contained in this briefing closely track to those that have been released in recent years. So...

The following is that briefing. In its entirety. Only one name is Xed out for reasons that will become apparent to the reader.

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