



First Person Account

The Chiêu Hồi We Knew



Cpl Bob Lindgren
S-2 Battalion
Scout
Vietnamese
Language

After consideration, I've decided not to reveal the names of those Vietnamese in the photo as some of them may still be alive and subject to retribution.

As far as the gentleman to my right, I was told by a worker at Danang's **Furama Resort** in 1989 that he was beheaded.

As far as the man to my left, we used to dig up booby traps on the **Military Service Road (MSR)** trail when we were on patrol after our point man would find **Surprise Firing Devices (SFDs)** using a probe stick. Being former VC, he used to place them before joining us as a scout. He'd go out there, lit cigar in his mouth and pull them out of the ground by the two wires attached to the cardboard pieces that, when stepped-on, would complete the circuit to activate the blasting cap.

He'd pull that sucker out of the ground, cigar still burning in his mouth, stand up and show it off to us with a "shit eating grin" on his face.

No names. I don't want to risk the lives of anyone that might still exist.



I'm in the middle with two former VC flipping me the bird. They were executed after we left country. The other Marine is Sgt. Van W. Martin, passed away over 20 years ago. All Vietnamese pictured were Chiêu Hồi, former Viet Cong."



Safe Conduct Pass calling on patriotism

The Chiêu Hồi Program

Viet Cong defection was urged by means of a propaganda campaign, usually leaflets delivered by artillery shell or dropped over enemy-controlled areas by aircraft, or messages broadcast over areas of South Vietnam. A number of incentives were offered to those who chose to cooperate, along with psychological warfare to break enemy morale.

To further this aim, invitations to defect, which also acted as **Safe Conduct Passes**, were printed on clear plastic waterproof bags used to carry ammunition for the US soldiers' M-16 assault rifles.

Each bag held one M-16 magazine and was sealed to prevent moisture from the jungle's humid climate damaging the contents.

When the magazine was needed during a firefight with the ene-



A romantic plea to the Viet Cong, "My darling, why do you want me to miss you? and cash rewards for turned-in Viet Cong weapons."



Cpl Bob Lindgren and S-2 Scout "Huy" (Former VC) at battalion inspection, Cau Ha Combat Base, south of Marble Mountain.

my, the bag would be torn open and discarded, in the hope that it



would later be discovered by enemy troops who would read the text and consider defection.

By 1967, approximately 75,000 defections had been recorded, but analysts speculate that less than 25% of those were genuine.

The program had some difficulty catching on, due in part to culture gap—errors, such as misspellings and unintentionally offensive statements—and worsened by communist reprisals against defectors and their families.

To make matters worse, as testified by Sergeant Scott Camil during the **1971 Winter Soldier Investigation**, the passes were sometimes ignored by U.S. forces, and their holders shot while surrendering.

Overall, however, the Chiêu Hồi program was considered successful.

- Bob Lindgren