

John McCain and Me
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In 1968, while serving as an interrogator with the USMC, I was assigned to the 11th ITT (Interrogation/Translation Team), 3rd Marine Division at the prisoner-of-war (PW) compound in DaNang, Republic of Vietnam. One of dozens of interrogations I conducted during my 13-month tour of duty, was with a rather interesting NVA (North Vietnamese Army) prisoner-of-war who provided some unusual information. As part of our procedures, our interrogation team members routinely asked PW's if they had ever seen an American held prisoner anywhere. Occasionally, they would answer they had seen Americans, sometimes in captivity, and once, one was seen fighting alongside the enemy Viet Cong. We kept an album with photographs of all our military personnel who were missing in action and asked those who said they had seen an American to go through the album. Only once, in all my interrogations, was a PW able to identify a person from the photos. He said that he had witnessed an American pilot who had been shot down over Hanoi being manhandled by his captors while a crowd was cursing and spitting at him. He told me that the pilot was held with others who had been captured and gave me a description of the prison compound and its approximate location. The American he identified from the photo was a US Navy Lt. Commander named John McCain. For me, at that time, John McCain was just another Navy pilot missing in action who had his photo in the album. I had never heard of the man. I submitted my interrogation report and thought little more about it. However, a year or two later, after I had returned home to the States, I heard a radio news story about an attempted rescue of American prisoners-of-war from a compound in Vietnam. The location of the compound was not identified. Unfortunately, everyone had been moved so there was no one at the site. The news story reminded me of the interrogation I had conducted in DaNang concerning the captured Navy pilot, Lt. Cmdr. McCain.

It was 1973 when I first saw John McCain on television as one of the returning prisoners-of-war from Vietnam. There he was - the American from the photo that had been picked out by the PW I had interrogated several years earlier. For those who may not know, John McCain was held as a prisoner-of-war for five and a half years (1967-1973), much of the time in solitary confinement. He retired from the Navy as a Captain in 1981. His naval honors include the Distinguished Flying Cross, Silver Star, Bronze Star, Legion of Merit, and Purple Heart. John McCain's first person account of his time in captivity can be found here <http://www.usnews.com/articles/news/2008/01/28/john-mccain-prisoner-of-war-a-first-person-account.html>. Since that time, I have recounted this story to very few people, however, a short time ago, I decided to send an email message to now Senator McCain briefly telling him about my interrogation report of 1968. I have never received a response but I suspect his email is screened and he has possibly never seen the message I sent.

John McCain is now a candidate for President of the United States. The senator is an honorable and patriotic man who has sacrificed much for his country. I respect him greatly for his military service. As a former trained military interrogator, I disagree with

his views on passive interrogation techniques for enemy combatants. I also disagree with his positions regarding illegal aliens, President Bush's tax cuts, oil exploration in the Arctic National Wildlife Refuge, climate change regulation, drug re-importation from Canada, and campaign-finance legislation. But I agree with him on doing whatever it takes to win the fight in Iraq, on finding and eliminating Islamic militants and eradicating al-Qaeda and other terrorist factions. This is the most dangerous threat to our country today. I will vote for Senator McCain because I love America and because we cannot elect someone as the next President of the United States who will retreat in the face of evil. I know that John McCain loves his country and I trust that he will never retreat. He will be an outstanding Commander-in-Chief of our military.

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