

Mayaguez Rescue Toll Revised

The Pentagon once again revised its estimate of casualties in the Mayaguez rescue operation, yesterday reporting that 49 Americans were wounded.

Spokesman Joseph Laitin said the number of wounded was being reduced "for the time being" from the 70-to-80 estimate made Sunday by Defense Secretary James R. Schlesinger. The toll of dead remained at five, with 16 listed as missing.

Officials at the Pentagon and the White House denied that the extent of U.S. casu-

alties had been withheld purposely. There wasn't "any intention to hide any bad news," presidential press secretary Ron Nessen said yesterday.

"The President wants those figures as much as you do," Nessen said. "He is somewhat puzzled about the length of time it has taken."

Pentagon sources said the difficulty in obtaining an accurate casualty figure was due to the fact that the approximately 200 Marines and the Air Force crewmen flying them into action in

helicopters were widely dispersed after the mission.

Thus, the military says, it has been difficult to get an accurate count of the surviving Marines. There is even some uncertainty, according to some sources, about precisely how Marines were involved in the operation.

Many of the wounded, according to one Marine source, were "in the band-aid category," and only one Marine is so seriously wounded that he might not survive.

"There were a couple of

headaches, some mild concussions and some slight hearing-loss reports,"* the source told United Press International. He said he suspected the concussions and hearing loss might have resulted from the dropping on Tang Island of a 15,000-pound bomb, the largest non-nuclear weapon in the U.S. arsenal.

The Pentagon also released yesterday the names of three of the servicemen killed. They are: Air Force 2d Lt. Richard Vendegeer, of Buckland, Mass.; Air

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Force S. Sgt. Elwood E. Rumbaugh, of Dothan, Ala., and Marine Lance Cpl. Ashton N. Loney, of Albany, N.Y.

Pentagon spokesman Laitin said the United States was making no efforts to search for bodies lost at sea. But the State Department acknowledged that it had contacted the International Red Cross in an effort to get the Cambodians to return any bodies that might have been left on the island.

Laitin said, "We are pretty certain no one was left alive on the island."

* Fifteen Purple Heart medals awarded - WXP 21 May 75, Michael Getler.