

10 Americans Held By Saigon Regime, U.S. Aides Believe

By Stan Crock

Washington Post Staff Writer

Ten Americans, including a 6-year-old girl and two government officials, are believed to be in the custody of the Communist government in Saigon, State Department officials said yesterday.

In testimony before a congressional subcommittee, Philip C. Habib, assistant secretary of state for East Asian and Pacific affairs, also said the administration has reversed its opposition to granting visas to Vietnamese officials who will hold observer status at the United Nations.

The government has "good reason to believe" nine prisoners are being held by the Provisional Revolutionary Government, Habib told the Senate Judiciary Subcommittee on Refugees and Escapees.

Frank A. Sieverts, State Department special assistant for matters involving prisoners of war and missing in action and deputy coordinator for humanitarian affairs, said in a telephone interview that the International Red Cross recently informed the department of a 10th American captured in the last days of the Communist takeover in April.

Habib said the prisoners "were seen in the last days of the war." The administration is seeking information about them, as well as 2,300 Americans in Indochina who are unaccounted for, through direct and indirect contacts with the PRG, he said.

Despite these contacts, Sieverts said, the department is

"concerned" at the absence of any communication from the prisoners since a May 18 letter from one of them to his parents.

Sieverts said eight of the Americans were captured along with two Canadians, an Australian and a Filipino on March 10 at Banmethuot. They are believed to be under detention in Pleiku province in the Central Highlands, he said.

Sieverts identified the prisoners as John and Carolyn Miller, both 45, missionaries associated with Wycliffe Bible Translators of Los Angeles; their daughter, Luann, 6; Richard Phillips, 45, and his wife, Lillian, 44, of Albany, Ore., missionaries with the Christian and Missionary Alliance of Nyack, N.Y.; and Betty Mitchell, 54, of Cass Lake, Minn., also associated with the alliance.

Others captured March 10 were Paul H. Struharik, 35 of Barberton Ohio a regional development officer with the Agency for International Development, and Jay Scarborough, 29, of Camp Hill, Pa., a Ford Foundation scholar and graduate of Cornell University's Southeast Asia program.

James F. Lewis, a 31-year-old administrative officer for the U.S. consulate in Nha-Trang, was captured April 16 in hanrang, where he had gone to assist Vietnamese workers in the consulate there, Sieverts said.

The International Red Cross told the State Department this week that Arlo N. Gay, 52, a

fisherman who had lived on islands off the southern coast of Vietnam since 1966, was captured April 30 as Saigon fell, Sieverts said.

Mrs. Mitchell's husband, Archie, 52, was captured by guerrillas on May 30, 1962 in the same area that she was captured, and he has been listed as missing since then, Sieverts said.

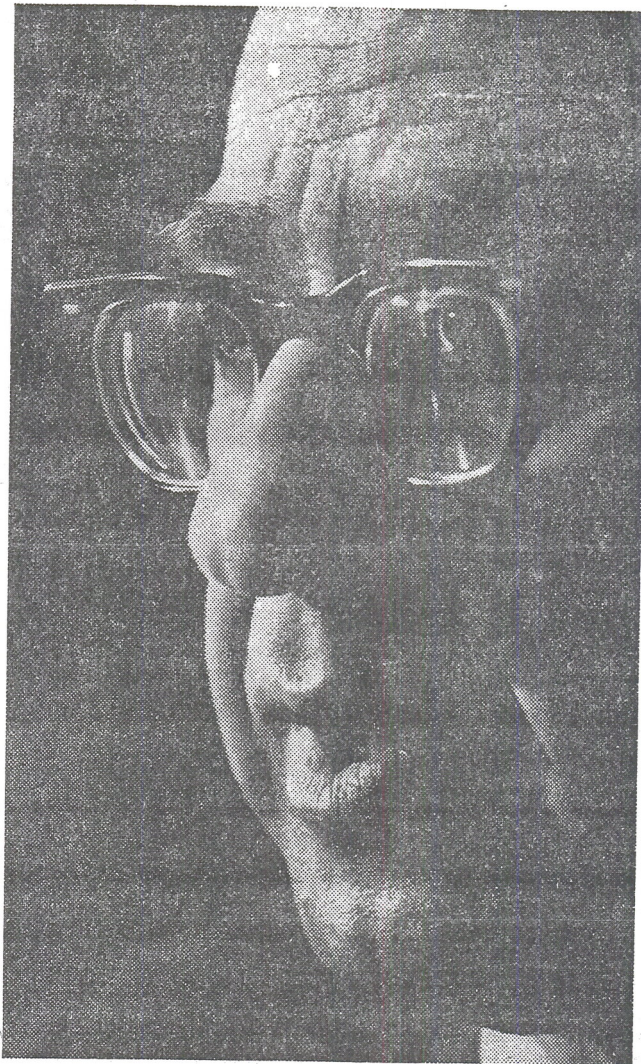
The last communication received from the prisoners was a letter from Scarborough to his parents in Camp Hill, Sieverts said.

Under questioning by Sen.

Edward M. Kennedy (D-Mass.), Habib said the United States will approve visas for Vietnamese observers at the United Nations.

Previously the State Department had given strong indications that it would not.

A State Department spokesman said Hanoi and Saigon have filed individual requests to be seated as observers and for admission to the U.N. Hanoi, the Democratic Republic of Vietnam, requested admission July 16, one day behind the PRG in Saigon, he said.



By James K. W. Atherton—The Washington Post

Philip C. Habib testifies on missing Americans.