

POW Deaths Led To Rescue Raid

Tip Given By Yank In Hanoi

Claimed 11 POWs Died

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WASHINGTON—A report from an anti-war American in Hanoi that 11 more American POW's had died in North Vietnamese prison camps triggered the dramatic but unsuccessful U.S. raid Saturday to rescue American prisoners.

This was disclosed today by U.S. officials who identified the American as Peter Weiss, husband of Mrs. Cora Weiss, who heads both the Committee of Liaison With Families of Servicemen Detained in North Vietnam and

the New York-based Women's Strike for Peace.

Weiss was in the North Vietnamese capital during the daring American raid and reportedly told U.S. officials here yesterday that he saw flares dropped by U.S. Navy planes near Hanoi to divert the Communists from the rescue attempt.

20 POWs

U.S. officials also disclosed for the first time that intelligence had indicated about 20 prisoners of war were at the North Vietnamese camp at Son Tay, about 23 miles west of Hanoi. The commando-style raid was carried out in post-midnight darkness.

The decision to launch the raid was personally taken by President Nixon and held within the tightest White House and Pentagon circles.

U.S. officials said they originally considered attempting the rescue when Mrs. Weiss reported earlier this year that six American servicemen had died in North Vietnamese prisons. Mrs. Weiss personally informed

the families of the dead servicemen.

Officials here refused to reveal how Weiss was able to contact his wife in New York, but said they had received word of the additional deaths before ordering the raid. Weiss reportedly left Hanoi Saturday morning and returned to New York late Sunday night.

The report of 11 more deaths corroborated an earlier public statement by Mrs. Weiss that six American servicemen had died recently in North Vietnamese camps.

Defense Secretary Melvin Laird reportedly used the account of the deaths to support his argument to President Nixon that possible North Vietnamese reprisals against American prisoners should not be the determining factor in ordering new bombing raids.

The reasoning was that if the prisoners were dying anyway, it mattered little whether North Vietnam took additional steps to make their lives more miserable.

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