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EXCERPTS FROM [Secretary of State William P. Roger's] NEWS CONFERENCE [15 Jun]

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Q. In the absence of any progress in the negotiations and under the policy of Vietnamization, how do you now envision securing the release of American prisoners of war?

A. Well, I don't have to tell you that it's an extremely difficult proposition because the North Vietnamese have decided undoubtedly that they are going to hold these prisoners to try to achieve political objectives. In effect, they're using them for ransom payments. Obviously the United States, although we have tremendous concern for the safety of the prisoners, can't lose sight of our national purpose and we can't absolutely abandon our national objectives to pay ransom.

Q. Can you cite for us some instances when P.O.W.'s have been returned before a conflict has come to an end?

A. I've been asked this question before. I think there have been some. But the principal issue at the moment in terms of P.O.W.'s is failure to live up to international law. North Vietnam has refused to have any inspection of prison camps; many of the wives and families of those who are missing are not sure that their husbands are alive or not. There's no inspection of the prison camps and so forth.

So we would hope that, in the first instance, that at least North Vietnam could live up to the international law.

[End of transcript.]