

SF Examiner *

Release of 187 POWs Not True

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STOCKHOLM — (AP) — The Scandinavian airline said today a report that American military officials had asked the airline to fly 187 American prisoners of war from Laos to Europe was incorrect.

The earlier report had brought a flood of official denials from American and North Vietnamese officials.

The airline said today its office in West Germany had been approached in mid-July by a "private individual" who wanted to arrange a charter flight from Laos to Rome "for 187 passengers."

Called Off

"It was never mentioned that the category of passengers was military personnel," SAS said today.

The airline said it made preliminary arrangements

and was ready to sign a contract, but this "has been called off by the private contact of SAS in Germany."

The "private individual" was not identified by name or nationality.

The report of a prospective POW flight was first published last night in Sweden's biggest newspaper, Dagens Nyheter, which said the flight would be on Aug. 12.

U.S. Denial

This was followed by an announcement from an SAS spokesman that U.S. military authorities in West Germany had asked to charter a DC8 to airlift 187 POWs from Vientiane.

In Washington, President Nixon's press secretary, Ronald Ziegler, said U.S. government "has not been informed of any such plan, nor has the U.S. participated in negotiating a plan such as suggested in the Swedish newspaper."

Xuan Thuy, North Vietnam's chief negotiator at the Paris peace talks, called the reports "excessive imagination."

fuller report of statement
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