

U.S. Reports a Sharp Drop In '71 Mail From P.O.W.'s

WASHINGTON, Nov. 11 (UPI) —The State Department said today that the number of letters being received from United States prisoners in North Vietnam has declined drastically compared with the number last year.

The department's spokesman, Charles W. Bray III, commenting on Hanoi's announcement of arrangements for Christmas packages this year, released figures relating to the drop in mail.

He said that during the last six months 170 letters have been received from American prisoners in North Vietnam. The equivalent figure for 1970 was 1,300 letters, he said.

In 1971, he added, letters were received from all of the 339 prisoners who have been reported to be in custody by Hanoi. This year only 50 have been heard from, according to Mr. Bray.

"We do not know why the mail has declined," he told newsmen. "Hanoi's announcement [on Christmas packages] would mean more to families of prisoners if they were not faced by an abrupt and unnecessary stoppage of mail."