

Anger Over POW Dead

WASHINGTON — (AP) — A State Department official acknowledged today that many Americans missing in Indochina are dead.

His statement to a House subcommittee drew an angry reaction from the mother of a downed American pilot.

"We recognize, of course, that many of the men listed as missing in Indochina are almost certainly dead," said William H. Sullivan, deputy assistant secretary of State for East Asian and Pacific affairs.

More Grief

While cautioning that no one except the North Vietnamese really know how many of the more than 1600 military men the United States says are captured or missing are really dead, Sullivan said the government keeps track of the names of men who are probably dead and notifies their families.

Pilots in other planes sometimes report that no parachute was opened when a U.S. jet goes down, and rescue planes sometimes find a "high probability" that a pilot did not

survive, Sullivan said.

Mrs. Donald Shay of Linthicum, Md., did not dispute that some of the missing are dead, but said Sullivan's saying so only causes more grief for their families.

Mrs. Shay, mother of Air Force Capt. Donald Shay Jr. and an assistant national coordinator of the National League of American Servicemen Captured or Missing in Southeast Asia, called Sullivan's remarks "a terrible thing to say."

'The Last Hope'

"Why make it public," she told reporters after the hearing. "We should hold out until the last hope."

In reporting to the House Foreign Affairs Committee on the status of U.S. efforts to free prisoners of war, Sullivan said, "We are continuing to do all in our power to assist our men held by the enemy, to obtain information about them and word from them, and to secure their earliest possible release."

But he said the U.S. government will not encourage or cause the collapse of the South Vietnamese government as the price for obtaining the release of the prisoners.