

Red Paper's Interview With POWs

By Joel Henri
Agence France-Presse

Hanoi

Three captured American pilots yesterday were "starred" in a special report by the North Vietnamese army daily Quan Doi Nhan Dan, on American prisoners of war.

The report, the first of a series coinciding with the special week of concern for United States prisoners of war called for by President Nixon, was headed "The Lengthening List."

It featured interviews with Lieutenant Commander Hoffmann of Philadelphia, Captain Kenneth Fraser and Captain Lynn Gruenther, three of the 380 American prisoners whose names have been published by the Hanoi government.

The author of the report, journalist Thanh Tin, said the camp where the men were being held was surrounded by land where rows of vegetables were being cultivated alongside huge golden chrysanthemums and white roses.

'GUESTS'

"Apart from catering for Johnson's pilots, the comrades who belong to a special section of our Peoples' Army have to welcome new guests, aggressors sent by Nixon," the article said.

"As long as the U.S. President persists in launching military actions against our country, the camp's list will continue to grow," it added.

Thanh Tin's first interview was with Hoffmann of the U.S. Navy, whose left arm was in a plaster cast. The 31-year-old Navy pilot described in detail what happened on the morning of Dec. 30, 1971, the day he was shot down.

"We sailed on the carrier Coral Sea which had left San Francisco on November 12 to get back to Yankee Station in the Gulf of Tonkin on December 15.

"On the morning of December 30, I was finishing my eighth raid when I was shot down with my F-4B... Both I and my copilot, Charles, were captured about 9 o'clock in the morning," Hoffmann was quoted.

"I saw a missile on my left and tried to avoid it, but in the second that I lost sight of it, it exploded beside the plane. The jet engines caught fire. I ejected, hitting against the cockpit and fracturing my left arm."

X-RAYED

Hoffmann told the North Vietnamese newsman that his arm was now better. "I was X-rayed at the hospital and was able to see the plate. It was a clean break, although the bones were twisted. The doctors set it and put it in plaster."

The Navy pilot told Thanh Tin there was an anti-war movement "in the Army and Navy and on the Coral Sea herself."

Thanh Tin said Hoffmann told him that anti-war news-sheets were passed from hand to hand, and that many soldiers had taken to wearing pacifist badges.

According to the newspaper article, Hoffmann said that exceptional measures had been introduced on board the Coral Sea. "Detention rooms for opponents of the war, repressive acts by the military police, interrogation rooms actually on board ship for military judges" were among the measures he reportedly cited.

According to the article, Hoffmann said he had not taken part in anti-war movements "but I was not enthusiastic about carrying out attacks here."