

One of President Nixon's statements about prisoners of war during his press conference last night was refuted today by the French ambassador in Washington. Here's Robin Reisig [phonetic] of the Washington Bureau ... :

[Robin Reisig:] President Nixon said during his press conference last night 15,000 French were never accounted for at the end of the French-Indochinese war, and he would never let that happen to American prisoners of war.

But a French embassy official said today, "We are certain that the North Vietnamese gave us back all the prisoners they had after the Indochina war in 1954." The French Embassy official said that while 15,000 French troops were captured or missing in action during the Indochinese war, 9,000 of them were returned to the French. Former French Ambassador to the United States, Charles Lucette [phonetic] has said that France was certain that the last French prisoners were returned less than three months after the Geneva Agreements ending the war.

The State Department said later today that the 15,000 French prisoners of war Nixon referred to were actually Indochinese who held French citizenship.

[End of item.]