

'Electronic Device in Toothpaste'

By Peter Arnett
Associated Press

Peking

The American anti-war activists, who are in Peking with three prisoners of war released by North Vietnam, disclosed yesterday a charge by Hanoi that packages mailed to POWs from the United States have contained spying devices rigged into

such things as cans of milk.

The Pentagon called the charge "ridiculous."

Cora Weiss, leader of the four Americans who went to Hanoi to receive the released servicemen, said: "It looks to us an unmistakably professional job."

The charge was first broached on the American delegation's second day in

Hanoi, September 17. Hoang Tung, editor of the official Communist party newspaper Nhan Dan, said his government was "extremely upset by electronic devices hidden in packages regularly sent to prisoners."

EVIDENCE

The activist delegation — Mrs. Weiss, David Dellinger, the Rev. William Sloane Coffin and Professor Rich-

ard Falk — said they asked for evidence to back up the charge. This evidence, they said, was displayed Monday shortly before the group left for Peking and thence Moscow enroute to the United States.

Their schedule calls for a further stopover in Copenhagen and arrival in New York tomorrow night.

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anti-war delegation said this route was chosen to keep the three released pilots out of U. S. military hands on the way home.

As described by the delegation, the nearest thing to an "electronic device" seemed to be material for a radio receiver.

This correspondent did not see the display. I had accompanied the anti-war group from New York and had attended various meetings with the three released POWs and seven other POWs who were brought forward for interview Monday, but I was not advised that the alleged materials for espionage were to be shown.

I was elsewhere in Hanoi when the display took place at the Hoa Binh Hotel.

PHOTOS

Later Mrs. Weiss told of the display and I received photographs which she said the North Vietnamese had described as showing packages and contents sent to American prisoners.

A Pentagon spokesman, Major General Daniel James, said when asked for comment in Washington: "The charges are too ridiculous to dignify by trying to address them in detail. I know of no instance of such

actions taking place and I think it is just another of the propaganda web that Hanoi is spinning to obscure the real facts concerning her intransigent position in refusing to negotiate meaningfully our prisoners of war."

From the pictures could be discerned three names of alleged recipients: Charles Robert Tyler of Mesa, Ariz.; Edward Alan Brudno of Harrison, N. J., and William Robinson of Robinsonville, N.C.

EXAMPLES

Mrs. Weiss' group told of the following:

- An extra-large tube of Colgate toothpaste which when squeezed out revealed what Hanoi said was a receiving apparatus with a battery compartment and an earpiece.

- Inside a candy bar were two pieces of cellulose paper, 2 by 3 inches, with instructions for writing messages that would not be detectable. The special paper was to be folded so that it made a sharp edge and the secret message was to be written with this edge, the North Vietnamese said. Then, by using a code word in a normal letter, the prisoner receiving his letter that there was a special message

to be found by special processing of the paper.

- A peanut shell that had been hollowed out and contained a message, and also cans of Carnation milk and Maxwell House instant coffee which Hanoi said also contained messages.

- A toy hippopotamus about 1½ inches long, sealed, which when opened showed an enclosure with raised writing on one side reading "use secret hiding place" and on the other, "hold together, stand up."

- A bar of Ivory soap with wrapper on but cut in half, each half gouged out and containing plastic bags full of capsules said by the North Vietnamese to be used for secret writing.

One small cellulose sheet was said to have asked for verification of the deaths of five American flyers, as announced by the North Vietnamese, and information about any others known to be dead. The same sheet asked recipients to provide any information about prisoners captured anywhere in Indochina.

The instructions with this were to read: "Identify X reference word X provide details on letter writing procedure X. Are you under constant observation by

guards or interrogators while writing home queries? Are some POWs allowed to write? Do you get to keep your letters from home? Do POWs have access to or control of communications receivers? What frequencies and times can you receive queries? If not available, what critical parts are needed to build a receiver? How effective is covert POW communications?

The North Vietnamese asserted such things had encroached on the security, and that they had taken necessary steps. They demanded that the United States put "an end to this practice."

WELFARE

A North Vietnamese committee spoke of "violations committed by U.S. authorities." Mrs. Weiss said she could not believe that the families of POWs "would knowingly endanger the welfare of their men and keep them from getting longed-for stuff from home."

She added: "The U.S. government has been complaining to the American public about irregularities in package deliveries to pilots held in North Vietnamese camps, when it seems clear that the government itself is provoking this."

POW Spy-Mail Charge



AP Wirephoto

Cora Weiss, foreground, met with American flyers still held by Hanoi. Shown here are Lt. Richard Fulton, Cmdr. Eugene Wilbur, Lt. Donald Logan, Capt. George Rose and Capt. David Hoffman.

The three released prisoners — Navy Lieutenant **Mark Gartley**, Air Force Major **Edward Elias**, and Navy Lieutenant **Norris Charles** — left Hanoi after a banquet at the Hoa Binh Hotel.

Before they left, the members of the peace group met with seven other captured American pilots, most of them shot down over North Vietnam this year. These were **Captain David Hoffman** of San Diego, Calif.; **Captain George Allan Rose** of Fayetteville, Ark.; **Lieutenant Donald Karl Logan** of Northridge, Calif.; **Commander Eugene Wilbur** of Columbia Crossroads, Pa.; **Lieutenant Richard Fulton** of Mesa, Ariz.; **Lieutenant Greg Hanson** of Thousand Oaks, Calif., and **Lieutenant Peter Callahan** of Bellmore, N.Y.

The meeting took place in a downtown Hanoi building and the pilots entered the room in single file, smiling broadly and shaking hands with Mrs. Weiss and others of her group.

HEALTH

Captain Hoffman shared a cell with **Lt. Charles**, one of the released men. **Hoffman** said "Charles probably told you already, you can see I'm in good health. Food is as good as they can possibly make it. I suffered a broken arm when I landed, and I received excellent medical attention. I think we are in far more danger from our own aircraft dropping bombs than we are from the Vietnamese. I want to go home."

Asked if he had any message for his family, **Hoffman** said, "I miss them. I wish they could do something about this damn war."

Commander Wilbur, a prisoner 4 1/2 years, said, "Tell my family you have seen me. Use every facility to have them help you and the anti-war movement. Tell my wife I am working for it at this end. I have lived with a lot of people, and the prisoners here have no complaints. When I say they want the war over, I speak for all the prisoners."

Lieutenant Fulton, who said he was shot down June 13, added, "I was surprised at the treatment. My only complaint is about the treatment I received. I was misled."

'DUPED'

Asked by **Dellinger** how he felt about the war, **Lieutenant Callahan** said, "If there is ever a group of men duped by the government, here we sit. We will be disappointed if **McGovern** does not win."

He said he was shot down June 21 and added: "My wife was nine months pregnant at the time. I have one letter from her, but she did not mention if she'd had the baby. I may be a father and I may not be. I would like you to let her know that I'm interested."

(At her Long Island home, **Annelle Callahan**, 22, said the baby was born September 17 and has been named **Colleen**. She said she had written her husband of the birth.)