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Prisoners' Families Await Call

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They have been together since Friday morning, waiting.

There are 18 of them in downtown Washington. Several thousand more, throughout the United States, wait in the privacy of their homes.

They are the families of America's prisoners and missing in action. The first of them learned the fate of their loved ones last night, and the rest will learn today.

The 18 who have been pacing back and forth in a sixth-floor conference room at 1608 K St. NW are officers and board members of the National League of Families of American Prisoners & Missing in Southeast Asia.

Each has left a telephone number with a casualty assistance officer, a person assigned to them by the government to notify them, either way.

After the official list of prisoners and missing was given to U.S. representatives in Paris yesterday, the tension increased sharply.

After the list was telegraphed to Washington, officials at the Pentagon verified the names for spelling, home address and branch of service.

The first of the families were notified last night, a Defense Department spokesman said.

League officials got a spe-

cial briefing on Friday from presidential assistant Henry Kissinger, and three of them had a private meeting with President Nixon.

Notification will be given to 1,925 families—591 representing men known to have been captured and 1,334 more listed as missing.

For some, there will be unexpected joy. For others, unexpected grief.

"But if a man's family has lived with him being listed missing for several years, they're not going to give up just because his name isn't on a list," one next-of-kin said last week.

So the government will continue to search. A Pentagon spokesman said U.S. search teams will work from Thailand.