

War Prisoner Countdown Nears End

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The arduous task of notifying 555 American families that their relatives are prisoners and will be released—and telling more than 1,300 others that their loved ones are not accounted for neared completion last night.

The Defense Department said that lists turned over to U.S. officials in Paris contained 555 names of POWs but did not mention men held prisoner in Laos.

The names accounted for only a few of the 1,334 Americans listed as missing in action throughout Southeast Asia.

One of the few men previously listed as missing but now known to be a prisoner is Air Force Capt. William J. Henderson, 25, of Milwaukee. His father, George W. Henderson, was "astounded" when Dr. Roger Shields, head of the Pentagon's Operation Homecoming, interrupted a dinner at the Army-Navy Club here to tell the elder Henderson that his son is a prisoner in South Vietnam.

Other families, however, learned for the first time yesterday that their relatives were dead, either killed in action or had died while in prisoner-of-war camps. A Defense Department spokesman telephoned Laurette Cook of Bur-

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lington, Vt., and said that her husband, Marine Corps Maj. Donald Cook, had died in a North Vietnamese prison in 1967.

Still others, such as Iris Powers, reached "the logical conclusion that he is dead." Mrs. Powers, of 905 Sixth St. S.W., was told only that her son, Lowell, missing in South Vietnam since April 2, 1969, was not on the list of prisoners.

The total of 555 prisoners is short of the 591 men that the Pentagon had listed as POWs, and because it included some men previously listed as MIA, was a disappointment to many who hoped the actual number of prisoners would exceed the 591 figure.

Defense Department spokesman Jerry W. Friedheim said "a full explanation of the numbers" would be announced as soon as all families had been notified.

At a press conference yesterday afternoon, Phyllis Galanti, board chairman of the National League of Families of American Prisoners and Missing in Southeast Asia, said her organization is "gravely concerned that no list has yet been provided of men captured in Laos. We were promised that these men would be released in Hanoi."

Friedheim said, "We expect to get that list." He said the United States is "now pursuing this in Paris."

If the list has not been received by the time of the first meeting of the

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joint four-power military commission that is to implement the cease-fire, Friedheim said Maj. Gen. Gilbert H. Woodward, chief U.S. representative, "will raise it at that time."

The Pentagon had named only six men as prisoners in Laos, but 317 more were listed as missing there. Two of the six POWs showed up on a list as captured in North Vietnam, but none of the 317 MIAs were listed. Friedheim said he is confident, however, that there are "more than four" prisoners in Laos.

Mrs. Galanti, whose husband, Navy Lt. Cdr. Paul E. Galanti of Richmond, is among those prisoners to be released, said, "today is a day of mixed emotions for the families of captured and missing Americans."

As she read a statement, she was flanked by two other officers of the organization who received no news about their husbands.

Mrs. Galanti said she and her board members went over the 555 names yesterday morning and observed that it came "very, very close" to accounting for the 476 Vietnam. That would mean that the major discrepancy-known prisoners in North involves Laos and the 109 men held prisoner by the Vietcong in South Vietnam.

The Pentagon would not discuss a "dead list," but Mrs. Galanti said that the names of 23 men who had died in prison were also turned over by the Communists. She said the list included 20 persons previously reported as dead, and "three new ones," all in North Vietnam.

Friedheim said that names of newly-known dead would be released only after all next-of-kin-of survivors had been contacted.

After more than 24 hours of work, military casualty assistance officers had contacted—mostly in person—nearly all of the families, "but some, including one family in Samoa, are eluding us," Friedheim said.

Rep. G. V. Montgomery (D-Miss.), a member of the House Armed Services Committee, went to the Pentagon yesterday morning to check on the 18 men from his district who are prison-

ers or missing.

After talking with Defense Department officials, he said, "We'll have to face the blunt truth" that few of the 1,334 missing men are on the list of prisoners.

"I had hoped we could add 100, 150 or 200 names to those known captured," Montgomery said, "but now it doesn't look that way."

He said the "North Vietnamese were the first enemy that didn't allow the International Red Cross to go in" and inspect prison camps, so "we had reason to think the it (the total unaccounted for, but alive), might be high."

Montgomery, who served in both World War II and Korea, is chairman of the House Select Committee on U.S. Involvement in Southeast Asia. He said some members of the House leadership "would like to greet the returning men" at Clark Field in the Philippines, but said, "we might get in the way."

Maureen Dunn of Randolph, Mass., said "no one is talking about the five Americans (three military and two civilians) held prisoner in China." She said her husband, Navy Lt. Cdr. Joseph Dunn, was shot down over mainland China on Feb. 14, 1968.

The Defense Department would not comment on Mrs. Dunn's statement.

For families of men still listed as missing, the wait—now more than eight years in a few instances—continues, with less hope.

Shields, who directed the planning of Operation Homecoming, said, "It's not the end at all." He said the problem now is to find out

what happened to the missing.

"It's a long way before an official presumption of death," a Pentagon official said. Last week, Friedheim said the search for missing would continue "for years" if necessary.

Many of the unaccounted for are fliers who crashed in dense, uninhabited jungles. A search headquarters will be set up in Kanorn Phanom, Thailand.

For families of those men who will return, there were no more details on when

their journeys home would begin, although the Pentagon has mentioned Feb. 11 as a date for the first group to be flown out of Hanoi to the Philippines.