

[On Nixon press conference, this date.]

..... [Mr. Nixon] said that the prisoners of war should be allowed to return to their families as soon as possible. Mr. Nixon said, "We should not grandstand the prisoner of war issue. We should not exploit it." He said also, on the question of amnesty, "We will not grant amnesty to the few hundred who chose to desert their country to avoid service in Vietnam." He said, "Those who desert must pay their price," adding, "This price is a criminal penalty for disobeying the laws of the United States and not a junket in the Peace Corps." So Mr. Nixon remains very strong on the amnesty issue. Also --

Announcer [cannot identify from voice, interrupts]: I was going to say, about the prisoners of war - I wonder if he's going to let them talk to the press because --

Kalman: Oh - there was --

Announcer: On my vacation I talked to one of the POWs who came back last - one of the three who was released earlier, whom I happen to know, and he said he couldn't talk about it because under Presidential order he was forbidden to talk.

Kalman: There is a fascinating piece that we did last week on the evening news with the colonel at Travis Air Force Base who is apparently in charge of Operation Homecoming at Travis Air Force Base. [He] mentioned four guidelines under which prisoners, military prisoners of war, would be allowed to talk to the press - ultimately. [The first guideline] was that none of it will happen until after they've been completely de-briefed and checked medically by both the hospital at Clark Air Force Base and the hospitals at all the local bases. So just for a start, all the other guidelines aside, there's going to be a long delay before the press ever officially gets to talk to any of these prisoners of war.

Announcer: My friend indicated the only time he would be free to talk is when he is out of the service, which is in about a year.

Kalman: Well, that's certainly maybe the only time he'll be free to talk - you know, whether he's allowed to or not. But that's an altogether different question, and I shouldn't comment, because I'm just reporting the news.

.....