

LAOS P.O.W. LIST SHOWS 9 FROM U.S.

FEB 2 1973

Document Disappointing to
Washington as 311 Were
Believed Missing

NYTimes

By JOHN W. FINNEY

Special to The New York Times

WASHINGTON, Feb. 1 —

North Vietnam turned over to the United States in Paris today the names of nine American prisoners — seven servicemen and two civilians—held by Communist forces in Laos. The list also included the name of a Canadian civilian.

American officials were privately disappointed by the list since they had hoped that it would contain a substantial number of the 311 servicemen whom the Defense Department had reported missing and the 6 men carried as prisoners in Laos. Officials emphasized that the United States would be seeking clarification on the status of men believed captured or missing.

The provision of the prisoner list for Laos removed one procedural hitch that had developed in the prisoner-exchange program under the Vietnam cease-fire agreement that was signed Saturday, and it presumably cleared the way for release of the prisoners, probably starting next week.

When the Communist side supplied information Saturday on prisoners it held, the lists—to the surprise of American of-

Continued on Page 9, Column 3

Continued From Page 1, Col. 5

officials—covered only prisoners held in North Vietnam and South Vietnam and made no mention of prisoners in Laos. Since Sunday, the United States has been putting pressure on North Vietnam through diplomatic channels for information on the Laos prisoners.

In response today, North Vietnamese representatives in Paris turned over to American officials information that they said had been conveyed by the Neo Lao Hak Xat, the political form of the Communist-backed Pathet Lao guerrillas.

Previously Reported Missing

Of the seven military prisoners on the Laotian Communist list, four—all Air Force officers—had previously been reported by the Pentagon as missing in action. They are the following:

- Capt. Jack M. Butcher.
- Maj. Edward V. Leonard Jr.
- Maj. Norbert A. Goerner.
- Capt. Charles F. Riess.

The three others, all of whom had previously been listed by the Pentagon as prisoners of war, are:

- Lieut. Henry J. Bedinger of the Navy.
- Capt. Stephen G. Long of the Air Force.
- Lieut. Col. Walter M. Stischer of the Air Force.

The civilian prisoners on the Laotian list are:

- Ernest Cary Brace.
- Samuel Allen Mattix of Centralia, Wash.
- Lloyd Dudley Oppel of Courtenay, British Columbia, Canada.

Identified as Pilot

Mr. Brace was identified as a 41-year-old pilot with the concern of Bird & Son, which the State Department said was a contract air company working primarily for the United States Agency for International Development.

Mr. Mattix and Mr. Oppel, both 20 years old, are missionaries with Christian Missions in Many Lands, an organization with headquarters in Spring Lake, N. J. The two were reported to have been working in a small town in southern Laos in October when Communist forces entered it and captured them. Two American women missionaries were killed and nine members of the group narrowly escaped.

The State Department had listed six civilians as captured or missing in Laos. One possibility is that the three un-

counted for are being held by the Chinese and not by the Pathet Lao. An Air America C-123 cargo plane, carrying three Americans and one Laotian, was shot down in December, 1971, near a road that the Chinese are constructing through northern Laos.

Before the Communists issued their lists of American prisoners of war showing seven United States servicemen held in Laos, the Defense Department had put the number at

six. But two of these men, for reasons the department cannot explain, turned up on the list of prisoners held by North Vietnam.

With the Laotian list, the Communist side has now supplied the names of 591 prisoners — 562 military and 29 civilian—that it plans to release under the prisoner exchange. In addition, the Defense Department now lists 1,327 men as missing in action in Indochina.