

Pentagon Screens POW Gift Offers

WASHINGTON (AP) — A new car, a vacation in the Bahamas and free advice from a psychic who reads the future are among the grab bag of gifts proposed for the returning prisoners of war.

Dozens of offers from private industry, organizations, groups and individuals are flowing into the Pentagon. Each is being screened for "appropriateness and legitimacy," says Capt. A. R. Hawkins, head of the Pentagon's Office of Community Relations.

Defense Department regulations prohibit members of the armed forces from accepting gifts from a person or firm doing business with the Pentagon, but beyond that the men will be free to accept what they want.

Hawkins says the chief concern is that the repatriated prisoners not be exploited or be used in endorsements for products.

Each man will be informed of the offers after leaving the military hospital to which he will be shipped, and "it will then become a personal matter between the man, his family and the person or organization making the offer," Hawkins said in an interview.

In addition to these gifts, the 31 stateside hospitals at which the freed POWs will be treated have received numerous offers of assistance.

A bottling company wants

to provide free soda machines at one hospital. At another, free television sets were offered.

Fringed bedspreads donated by the Moose Lodge in Hammond, Ind., will decorate the rooms of the Great Lakes Naval Air Station near Chicago.

The commanding officer in each of these hospitals will decide whether to accept these offers.

Hawkins would not disclose names of the prospective donors or discuss in detail the gifts being offered returning servicemen.

But, in general, he cited these examples:

—An airline wanting to provide free transportation.

—An offer of lifetime passes to major-league baseball games.

—A one-week expense-paid vacation by a national motel chain at any one of its facilities across the country.

—In the Bahamas, a millionaire is offering his estate as a vacation place.

—A private organization would give each man a new wardrobe.

Not all of the gifts are so large. A group of third graders sent in \$1.93.

The Pentagon is working closely with the National League of Families, an organization composed of relatives of prisoners and missing servicemen, and will follow its wishes on how the offers are handled.