

SFChronicle FEB 24 1973

# POWs Say the

## *They Talk At News Conferences*

### San Diego

In a series of news conferences across the country yesterday, former prisoners of war insisted that the Vietnam war has succeeded, and that their years in prison were not in vain.

Some sharply criticized the idea of amnesty for draft evaders and the anti-war movement. But they denied reports that some prisoners were considered "collaborators" by their fellow POWs for making anti-American statements while in captivity. And none said he knew about reported plans to bring charges against returning POWs who made such statements.

Several prisoners did sign statements and give interviews that criticized the American conduct of the war. The New York Times has reported that they continued to do so even after ordered to stop by senior officers in the prison camps.

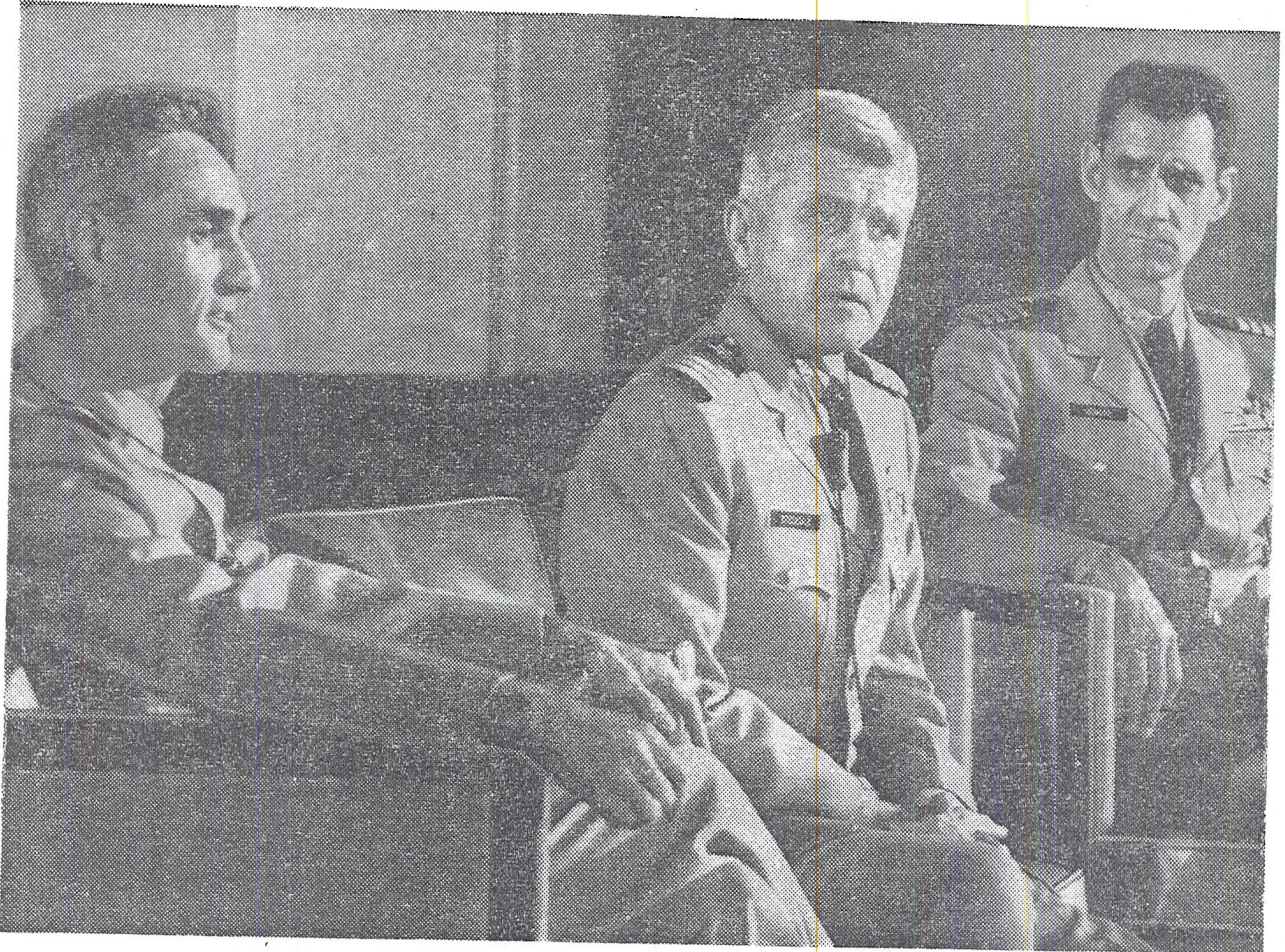
Lieutenant Colonel Carlyle S. Harris, speaking at Maxwell Air Force Base in Alabama, acknowledged that there were some "minor arguments" in the camps, but otherwise, the show of unity never cracked.

### HOSPITALS

The news conferences took place at the Naval hospital here and at six other hospitals where former POW's are receiving medical examinations and talking to intelligence officers.

It represented the first real chance in almost two weeks for the news media to question the returning prisoners, but most of them refused to discuss conditions

# War Succeeded



UPI Telephoto

NAVY CAPTAINS HOWARD RUTLEDGE, JAMES STOCKDALE AND R. T. JENKINS  
They talked with newsmen in a hospital in San Diego

in the prison camps. They contended that any adverse publicity might hinder the swift release of the remaining prisoners.

One who did talk about his experience was Sergeant Ken Wallingford, who appeared at Brooke General Hospital in Houston. Wallingford, who was taken prisoner in South Vietnam last April, said he had been kept in a cage with a ten-foot chain locked to his ankle most of the time.

## PILOTS

Almost all of the men who spoke were held prisoner in North Vietnam, including the three who appeared here: Captain Howard E. Rutledge, Captain James B. Stockdale, the senior Naval officer held in the north, and Captain Harry T. Jenkins

Jr. All were Navy pilots shot down in the fall of 1965.

Despite the massive disillusionment with the war that has infected the country since they left, the men agreed enthusiastically with Jenkins when he said: "We started out to assure the self-determination of the Vietnamese people and I think we have. I really don't believe we wasted our efforts."

Jenkins, 45, said he was "a little disgruntled" at what he called a "small minority" of protesters who opposed the war. He was particularly critical of activists who visited Hanoi while the fighting was going on. "I think they shamed our nation in the eyes of the enemy," he declared.

When asked about amnes-

ty, Jenkins said, "I don't know a single man who fought in this war who would accept amnesty and I don't know why anyone who didn't fight should be offered amnesty." The small crowd of military people watching the news conference burst out into applause.

The men seemed surprised at the welcome they have received.

## TEETH

"We do not consider ourselves heroes," said Stockdale, whose wife, Sybil, was the founder of the National League of Families. "We want no handouts. We ask only to compete in this society to achieve the responsibility and productivity that we on our own feel we can demonstrate."

Doctors here report that

the main medical problems of the men involve bad teeth and intestinal parasites, but that their general health is good. Stockdale called their condition a "tribute to American vigor and self-esteem."

Like many of those returned, Stockdale is eager to get on with his military career, despite a leg injury suffered when he was shot down.

"If I ran a prison camp on a stiff leg," he said, "I can run a ship with a stiff leg."

Asked about the changes they had noticed in American society, Jenkins replied "I find it a little disconcerting to find women wearing pants and men wearing women's hair styles."

N.Y. Times Service