

THE STATES.

Vol. 96—No. 224

Tuesday, February 27, 1973

New Orleans, La.

Protesters Delayed

By The Associated Press

Air Force Col. Robinson Risner, one of the most outspoken American POWs released by North Vietnam, says he



Capt. Edwin A. Hawley Jr.

believes "beyond any doubt" that Vietnam war protesters and their spokesmen "kept us in prison an extra year or two."

Risner, interviewed in Oklahoma City, was one of several returned POWs to voice their views on the war from military bases and hospitals across the country today and yesterday.

Among those was Spec. 4 Keith Albert, 23, of Thibodaux, who told a San Antonio news conference he wants to leave the Army to attend college. A prisoner in South Vietnam for almost three years, Albert said he hopes to major in biology.

COL. RISNER, 48, said Monday he believes the release of American POWs came about largely because of President Nixon's decision to step up bombing and the introduction of B52 raids against the Hanoi-Haiphong area last Christmas.

The Air Force officer, who spent 7½ years in Hanoi prison camp, said American prisoners were "extremely

surprised" to learn that South Dakota Sen. George McGovern had won the Democratic presidential nomination.

In an interview published by The Daily Oklahoman, Risner said he and other POWs opposed McGovern's policies and backed Nixon's handling of the war.

Risner said he could not see "the Vietnamese ever keeping their promises to a person who would come and beg for the prisoners.

"That's when he lost us, when Sen. McGovern said, 'If necessary, I will come to Hanoi and beg for the prisoners,' because we knew the Vietnamese would only have taken advantage of him and I think we would still be in prison."

Recalling the B52 raids, Risner said, "On the 18th of December — I think that was the first night of the B52 raids—there was never such joy seen in our camp before.

"There were people jumping up and down and putting their arms around each other and there were tears running down our faces.

ITEM

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Release, POW Says

"We knew they were B52s and that President Nixon was keeping his word and that the Communists were getting the message.



Col. Robinson Risner

"We saw reaction in the Vietnamese that we had never seen under the attacks from fighters. They at last knew that we had some weapons they had not felt, and that President Nixon was willing to use those weapons in order to get us out of Vietnam."

IN MONTGOMERY, Ala., an Air Force captain recently released from captivity in North Vietnam said today that American bombs hit near the prison camp where he was held.

Edwin A. Hawley Jr., 28, of Birmingham told newsmen at Maxwell Air Force Base that bombs dropped last December "hit so close they did frighten me. But I felt if it would end the war, it was a good thing."

Hawley is one of 11 POWs undergoing medical evaluation and debriefings at Maxwell. Two others flown to Maxwell have left.

Hawley said he may leave for Birmingham later today or Wednesday.

The Air Force pilot, a bachelor, said he was "sure cautions were taken so that we wouldn't be injured" in the bombings.

Hawley, like other POWs who have talked with newsmen since their re-

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Capt. George K. Wanat Jr.

POW Blames Protesters

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lease, refused to discuss his treatment while in captivity.

He said he lost about 20 pounds during his internment.

Like three other POWs who talked with newsmen last week at Maxwell, he said, "Of the men I associated with, I know of no one who collaborated with the enemy."

IN PHOENIXVILLE, Pa.— Capt. George K. Wanat Jr. said he found the human mind "amazing" and that his 10 months in a Viet Cong jungle prison were "not as bad as I imagined."

Wanat, captured by the Viet Cong last May after being separated from his unit during a ground assault at Loc Minh some 25 days earlier, told a news conference Monday at Valley Forge Army Hospital that he spent the lonely days in the jungle trying to get further south and trying to survive.

"I got rice from people and would steal bananas from trees," said Wanat, a native of Waterford, Conn.

After his capture, the 26-year-old Army captain said he was isolated in a bamboo cage for five months. Later, he was joined by another American officer.

A 1969 ROTC graduate of Norwich University in Vermont, Wanat said he spent a good deal of his time dreaming about freedom.

"I found the human mind to be a lot more amazing than I thought it was," he said. "I would lapse into fantasies and design a house in my mind or study leaves."

"I wasn't thrown into any pit with snakes and ants," he said. "The jungle was their home and they were

around." He added that his time as a prisoner of war was "probably not as bad as I imagined it to be."

The captain said he had formed no opinion on the question of amnesty for draft dodgers now living outside the country.

"I'd like to see everyone together," he said, "but you can look at it two ways — legally and morally. Legally they can't come home. Morally I'd like to see them come home, but there are quite a few things that must be straightened out."

ALSO IN SAN ANTONIO, an Army helicopter pilot grounded by the Viet Cong almost two years ago said today he did not make the end-the-war statement Radio Hanoi attributed to him before last fall's elections in the United States.

CWO James Hardy Hestand, 23, spoke at a news conference in Brooke Army Medical Center where he has been undergoing processing.

He was asked about an Oct. 3, 1972, Communist report that he called for a congressional end to fighting in Vietnam.

"I was told that when I got back. Last October or November I was listening to the radio and heard a few names and mine was one of them," he said. "I ask you to consider the source of that information and it's not true."

He said his captors asked him to make a statement and he refused.

Hestand said POW camp offered him "a long period of time to think about one's self" and the experience "helped me to make a lot of decisions of what I wanted."

He said at present, "I am pretty sure I will make the military a career."



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