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Mercy for AWOL POWs

Washington

The Army said yesterday no punishment will be brought against two enlisted men recently freed from Communist prison camps who were AWOL from their units at the time of capture.

An Army spokesman said Private Ferdinand Rodriguez of Brooklyn, N.Y., and Specialist 4 Richard Springman of Cottonwood, Ariz., will not be court-martialed or given any form of nonjudicial punishment. Both men were among the first group of POWs released by the Communists last month.

AWOL charges against a third man, Specialist 4 Keith A. Albert of Thibodaux, La., were dropped last month.

No reason was given for the Army's action, but officials said authorities felt the men suffered enough in captivity.

Rodriguez was listed as absent without leave from his unit in April, 1968, and subsequent information indicated he was a prisoner of the Viet Cong, the Army said.

Springman was last seen on May, 25, 1970, near Katun, Cambodia, and was placed on missing status until the Army determined two years later that he was captured.

Albert was a passenger in a military vehicle involved in an ambush near Dalat, South Vietnam, when he was captured by the Viet Cong May 1, 1970.

Associated Press