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Detente

'Heartens'

A POW

A Navy pilot who spent six years in a North Vietnamese prison said yesterday he is encouraged by improved American relations with Communist countries.

"We can't hope to get along in the world by erecting walls," Commander Charles E. Southwick told a press conference at the Oakland Naval Hospital.

"We've been very heartened by the detente between the United States and Russia and the improved relations with Red China," the 41-year-old flyer told reporters, adding that he also favors establishing trade relations with North Vietnam.

Southwick was flanked by Lieutenant Commander Charles Stackhouse and Lieutenant Gary Thornton. All three were shot down in the spring of 1967.

Stackhouse, a youthful looking 33-year-old graduate of the U.S. Naval Academy, spoke in bitter tones as he told how he withstood the long years of imprisonment.

"We had to make a stand despite all the harassment and propaganda the Communists gave us," he said. "The right leg was God and the left leg was the United States. With that solid foundation to walk on, we endured the time up there."

Stackhouse said he believes the U.S. accomplished its objective in preventing a Communist takeover of South Vietnam, but he added jocularly that the POWs "won" the war.

"We won because we left and the North Vietnamese had to stay there," he said. "It's what they chose, they can have it," he added in apparent reference to the bombing destruction.

He declined to elaborate further, in accordance with ground rules laid down by military authorities, until all final groups of known POWs U.S. prisoners are home. They are scheduled to be released this weekend.