

## P.O.W. COMPLAINTS BRING RED THREAT

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Communists Say Issue May

Impede Return of Dead

NYTimes

SAIGON, South Vietnam, April 4 (AP)—North Vietnam and the Vietcong said today that torture charges by former American war prisoners threatened to interfere with return of the bodies of prisoners who died in captivity and the search for United States servicemen listed as missing.

American officials believe that the Communists made their statement more "for the record" than as an indication of their plans.

Meanwhile, the South Vietnamese walked out of subcommittee meetings of the two-party Joint Military Commission with the Vietcong in protest against the six-week siege of the Government's ranger camp at Tong Le Chan, 50 miles north of Saigon. The South Vietnamese are already boycotting the parent commission because of the siege.

### Group's First Meeting

Th Communist warnings on the return of the bodies of prisoners came at the first formal meeting of the military team charged with accounting for hundreds of missing Americans and with recovery of the bodies of those killed in action or who died in prison.

"These guys are dead and the Communists have very little leverage in this matter," said a spokesman for the American team. He added that the statement by the Communist reflected their "extreme sensitivity" over the question of their treatment of captives. The North Vietnamese and Vietcong delegations referred to what they called their "humane treatment" of prisoners and protested American "distortion" of that policy.

Several former American prisoners complained on their return home that they were beaten, tortured and held for months in solitary confinement. Hanoi has charged that their complaints were spurred by the United States Government.

### Terms Set in Accord

The Paris peace agreement provides that both sides will help get information on military and civilian personnel listed as missing in action, seek out graves of the dead, and return their bodies to their country or origin.

North Vietnam has given the United States a list of 55 Americans it says died in captivity. The United States has listed 1,100 servicemen who were killed in action in Indochina whose bodies have never been recovered and has listed 1,328 simply as missing.

The North Vietnamese said they would discuss the return of bodies when the head of their team, Col. Tran Nguyen Do, arrives in Saigon, probably Sunday. That and the status of the missing are the American team's top priorities.

South Vietnamese military sources reported that the Saigon command had drawn up plans for a major operation to relieve the beleaguered ranger camp at Tong Le Chan.

### Threat of Major Battle

The sources reported that South Vietnam was holding up the operation for fear of touching off a major battle that could imperil the entire cease-fire agreement.

The ranger base, garrisoned by about 600 men, is surrounded by a regiment of North Vietnam's Ninth Division, about 2,900 men. Heavy artillery elements and several other regiments also are in the vicinity.

A Saigon spokesman said today that a North Vietnamese demolition force had penetrated Tong Le Chan's defense perimeter under cover of heavy artillery. He said the force was driven off, leaving three North Vietnamese dead. He said 12 Government soldiers had been wounded.

The Government said that nearly 400 rounds of artillery, rockets and mortar were fired at the camp.

The Government also reported that Communist gunners had fired more than 200 rounds into four Government infantry positions nine miles west of Hue and that 22 infantrymen had been wounded.