

## Sergeant to Lieutenant

# 3 POW Promotions OK'd

### Washington

Secretary of the Air Force Robert C. Seamans Jr. yesterday confirmed promotions of three Air Force sergeants to second lieutenant while they were war prisoners of the North Vietnamese.

Seamans offered second lieutenant appointments to Technical Sergeant Arthur N. Black, 28, of Bethlehem, Pa.; Staff Sergeant Arthur Cormier, 38, of Bay Shore, N.Y.; and Master Sergeant William A. Robinson, 29, of Robersonville, N.C.

The senior U.S. POW, Air Force Colonel John P. Flynn, conferred commissions on them while they were all in a POW camp.

But after the sergeants were released in February, the Air Force took the position that Flynn lacked the authority to do this.

The Air Force then reviewed the cases, leading to Seamans' decision to go through with the unusual commissioning.

Flynn told a new conference in Biloxi, Miss., that a secret officer's training

school was conducted at the Hanoi prison, despite the watchful eyes of North Vietnamese guards who forbade communication among prisoners.

"It was a formal program with two Air Force Academy graduates conducting the classes," Flynn said. "They were fine men and we had plenty of time.

"After they had completed their schooling, their squadron commander wrote a letter (in prison to Flynn), recommending them for promotion," he said. "I agreed."

The Air Force said that Robinson and Black will be commissioned formally next Monday at a ceremony at Andrews Air Force Base, Md.

Cormier has chosen to pursue a college degree

through an enlisted education and commissioning program, the Air Force said.

After completing this program, the Air Force said, Cormier, "will again be offered an appointment."

Robinson and Black intend to become pilots, the Air Force said. If physically qualified, they will be scheduled for flight training later this year.

All three sergeants were captured in the fall of 1965 while taking part in rescue operations. *Associated Press*