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UNRETURNED G.I.'S ARE FEARED DEAD

'No Indication' That Missing
Are Alive, Says Pentagon
NYTimes

WASHINGTON, April 12 (AP)

—The Pentagon, two months after the first American prisoners of war began coming home, said today that it had no evidence that there were any more prisoners still alive in all of Indochina.

Despite the fact that interviews with all returning prisoners are nearly complete, a Pentagon official, Dr. Roger Shields, said that none of the 1,359 Americans listed as missing are now technically considered prisoners. "We have no indication at this time that there are any American missing alive in Indochina," Dr. Shields said at a news conference.

Nonetheless, he said, American officials are continuing to press for more information, especially in Laos, from which only 10 prisoners of war were released.

Dr. Shields, in charge of the Pentagon's prisoner recovery operation, declined to rule out the possibility that some ex-prisoners of war might accuse others of collaboration or other offenses during the time they were held in North Vietnam. There have been recurring reports that such charges would be filed.

Tells of Recovery Center

Dr. Shields said that 153 Americans would be assigned to the joint casualty resolution center now being organized in Nakhon Phanom, Thailand, nine miles from the Laotian border. Searchers from the center will look for downed American planes and the remains of airmen throughout Indochina.

Noting that the searchers would face hazards like cease-fire violations and booby traps in the jungle, Dr. Shields said that the recovery operations should begin soon.

Officials at the center, including North Vietnamese representatives, have been meeting for about a week, he said.

He said that generally the emotionally, psychological and physical condition of the returned prisoners had been excellent. Of reports that many airmen in Laos were summarily executed by the Communist Pathet Lao, he said: "There is no basis in fact for this story."

Except for three men killed early in the war, Dr. Shields said, neither is there any indication that any American prisoner was tortured to death either by the Vietcong or the North Vietnamese.