

All U.S. POWs Free, Pentagon Maintains

Associated Press

The Pentagon said yesterday it has no evidence there are any more U.S. prisoners of war still alive in Indochina.

With interviews with returning POWs almost complete, Pentagon official Dr. Roger Shields said none of the 1,359 Americans listed as missing has been changed to POW status.

Nonetheless, Shields said at a news conference, American officials are continuing to press for more information, especially in Laos, from which only 10 PIWs were released.

Shields, in charge of the Pentagon's POW recovery operation, declined to rule out the possibility that POWs may charge other POWs with collaboration or other offenses committed while they were held in North Vietnam. There have been recurring reports that such charges would be filed.

Shields said there will be 153 Americans assigned to the Joint Casualty Resolution Center now setting up in Nakhon Phanom, Thailand, nine miles from the Laotian border.

From the center will go searchers looking for downed American planes and remains of airmen shot down throughout Indochina.

Noting that searchers will face hazards like remaining

cease-fire violations and live booby traps in the jungle, Shields would say only that attempted recovery operations should begin soon.

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

Generally, Shields said, the emotional, psychological and physical condition of the returned POWs has been excellent.

Of reports that many airmen in Laos were summarily executed by the Communist Pathiet Lao, Shields said, "There is no basis in fact for this story."

Except for three GIs killed early in the war, Shields said neither is there any indication that any American POW was tortured to death either by the viet cong or the North Vietnam