

Ex-P.O.W.'s to Get Health Counseling For 5-Year Period

WASHINGTON, June 1 (AP) —The Pentagon's health chief said today that all returned Vietnam War prisoners would be counseled and watched for five years to avoid the high violent death rates among former American P.O.W.'s after World War II and the Korean War.

The health official, Dr. Richard S. Wilbur, voiced concern about the potential for violence as former war prisoners and their families readjust to living together after years of separation.

Dr. Wilbur told newsmen that all 566 returned United States P.O.W.'s had suffered what doctors call "stress reaction" after coming back, but he said these manifestations of depression, fright and euphoria "will not last with them."

He recalled that American servicemen who returned from Japanese prison camps in World War II and from Korean camps in that war "did badly in the first three years" after they were freed.

He spoke of a high rate of trauma resulting in suicides, murders and accidental deaths during that period.

The doctor did not provide figures, but military doctors reported earlier this year that the death rate of World War II P.O.W.'s who had returned from Japanese prisons averaged 50 per cent higher than the general United States population. The post-Korean rate was reportedly comparable.

With this in mind, Dr. Wilbur said, "we will counsel the men and all their families" to avoid a post-Vietnam repetition. "We plan to follow them for five years, even if they resign," he said.

Dr. Wilbur said returning P.O.W.'s from the Vietnam War had experienced "a lot of difficulty in moving back into their families."