

'Pressure' on Accused POWs

SACRAMENTO — Eight former POWs in a group of eight charged by their senior officer with collaborating with the enemy are "under tremendous pressure" after being "branded as criminals," according to the lawyer for one of the men.

Joseph Remco, attorney for Marine Staff Sergeant Alfonso E. Biate, made this statement in a telephone interview about the suicide Wednesday of one of the eight former POWs, Marine Staff Sgt. Abel Larry Kavanaugh.

Kavanaugh, 24, who shot himself to death at the Commerce City, Colo., home of his father-in-law, was a close friend of Biate's, Remco said.

Biate, who recently married and lives in Downey, Calif., became "incredibly distraught" when he learned of the death and closed himself off from contact with reporters, Remco said.

The charges were brought against the eight men by the senior POW officer in the camp, Colonel Theodore W. Guy of Tucson.

Remco argued the eight were not "ordinary persons. For six years they existed only knowing they were coming home. Then they are branded as criminals only because they disagree with government policy."

"They don't know if they're going to be prosecuted on these charges or not — they were filed three or four weeks ago and the Secretary of Navy is sitting on them, apparently testing public opinion."

Kavanaugh couldn't take it. Biate can't take it. I talked to him on the telephone, and he was in tears and unable to comment. He is too upset to deal with it. I don't know if the others can take it or not.

"It is also clear to me from the way the charges have affected the other POWs . . . that Kavanaugh is not an isolated case at all," said Remco, an attorney for the American Civil Liberties Union.

He added that he thought the same thing that hap-

pened to Kavanaugh could happen to the others" and said he personally held the Secretary of Navy responsible for sitting on the charges so long.

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