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Ex-Prisoner Denies Illegal Acts in Hanoi

By William Claiborne
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A Marine Corps pilot who has been charged with mutiny and aiding the enemy as a prisoner in North Vietnam said yesterday he is not ashamed of anything he did in six years of captivity.

"I am not ashamed of any action I took as a prisoner and I have not done anything illegal, disloyal, dishonest or harmful to the best interests of my fellow Americans," said Lt. Col. Edison W. Miller, who was the highest-ranking Marine held prisoner by North Vietnam.

Miller and Navy Capt. Walter E. Wilber were accused Tuesday by Rear Adm. James B. Stockdale of mutiny and aiding the enemy, both capital offenses. They were also charged with failure to obey orders, soliciting collaboration, misconduct as a prisoner and causing insubordination.

Stockdale was deputy senior officer at the Hanoi Hilton prison camp, in which Miller and Wilber were both incarcerated.

Previously, eight U.S. enlisted men had been accused of collaboration by Air Force Col. Theodore W. Guy, commander of a Hanoi prison camp called the Plantation. One of those ex-POWs, Marine Sgt. Abel Larry Kavanaugh,

24, committed suicide Wednesday in Commerce City, Colo.

Miller claimed yesterday he did everything in his power to improve the conditions of his fellow POWs.

In a lengthy statement issued by his attorney, Melvin Belli, of San Francisco, Miller described in detail his bailout from a jet fighter on Oct. 13, 1967, in which he said he suffered a broken back and ankle fractures. Moreover, he said, his left wrist was paralyzed for several months as a result of a beating by his captors for trying to escape.

He said he lost between 70 and 90 pounds in captivity, and that he has suffered "severe hearing loss."

In his statement, Miller said he had never met Stockdale and that he "completely and vehemently" denied the prison camp commander's charges.

"After handling over five years of captivity under very harsh conditions, I now have to deal with the severe problems of these charges. In addition, I am also under the strain of the pending dissolution of my marriage of some 20 years," Miller said.

Miller, 41, a veteran of the Korean war, was sued for divorce by his wife May 31. A resident of Tustin, Calif., he is the father of five sons.

The office of the Secretary of the Navy is studying Stockdale's charges to decide whether to bring grand jury-like proceedings against Miller and Wilber.

Navy officials at the Pentagon refused again yesterday to release any details of the offenses that the two pilots are alleged to have committed.