

Relatives of MIAs Ask Congress' Aid In Seeking Return

By Major C. Wells

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About 100 relatives of servicemen still missing in Southeast Asia gathered yesterday on the Capitol steps and asked congressional support for the 1,300 men still unaccounted for.

The event was highlighted by the arrival of Catherine Helwig, mother of a marine missing in action since 1966, and Carol Bates, the originator of POW/MIA bracelets, both of whom walked here from New York, where they started on Oct. 24.

The gathering here was just one of the National Runs and Walks for Freedom held across the country yesterday. Some governors also proclaimed yesterday as "MIA Awareness Day."

The National Color Guard opened the ceremony and Mrs. Helwig presented a black and white POW/MIA flag that read "You Are Not Forgotten" to Sen. Stuart Symington, (D-Mo.), of the Armed Services Committee.

Members of the National League of Families of American Prisoners and Missing in Southeast Asia and six former POWs dressed in loose-fitting prisoners' garb distributed red, white and blue buttons

that read "MIA, Only Hanoi Knows" and "POW's Never Have A Nice Day."

They also presented petitions to Sen. Symington and the speaker of the House, Rep. Carl Albert, (D-Okla.) asking the government to continue the search for the missing Americans and to pressure Hanoi to live up to the Paris Peace Conference Agreement of Jan. 27, 1973.

They say that nine months after the peace agreement was signed, more than two-thirds of the 2,000 Americans killed or missing in Vietnam are still unaccounted for.

A letter delivered to Mrs. Helwig from President Richard M. Nixon said in part, "I welcome this opportunity to reiterate my firm determination to press on for a full accounting of the fate of those brave citizens and to pursue this priority task vigorously until it is achieved..."

"When the prisoners of war came home, everyone said the war was over," Mrs. Helwig said. "Everyone was talking of peace with honor. But when you abandon 1,300 men there is no peace with honor."