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U.S. Flier Who Fled Prison Camp Tells of Ordeal

Depicts Torture After Being Shot Down Near Border of Laos and North Vietnam

SAN DIEGO, Calif., Sept. 13 (AP)—A German-born United States Navy flier who escaped from a North Vietnamese prison camp said today that American prisoners had been beaten, shot at and hung upside down from trees, with ants put on their faces, in a campaign of harassment.

The apparent aim of the captors, said Lieut. (jig.) Dieter Dengler, was to persuade the prisoners to sign statements condemning United States actions in Vietnam.

Lieutenant Dengler, 28 years old, of Pacifica, Calif., described his experiences at a news conference.

He was rescued July 20, six months after his plane crashed on his first flight over North Vietnam. He said he had crawled from the wreckage and evaded the enemy for a day, then was captured.

He escaped after six days, was captured again, then escaped anew with six other prisoners June 29 and spent 23 days walking through the jungle to safety.

Handcuffed in Camp

In captivity, the lieutenant said, he was marched through villages to a prison camp, where "we were locked up in crude wooden blocks and handcuffed."

He added: "We were taken out and beaten for no reason. They hang you upside down on a tree for five hours and put ants on your face."

In the mornings, he said, prisoners were shot at as they ran to a latrine. None were hit, he added, "but they came pretty close."

The flier said that so far as he knew no prisoners yielded to pressure to condemn the United States.

He said that his captors had no knowledge of Geneva Convention regulations regarding the treatment of prisoners and that he saw no representatives of the International Red Cross.

The pilot has been hospitalized at the naval hospital here since July 27, and appeared to have regained most of the 59



Associated Press Wirephoto

Lieut. Dieter Dengler and mother at news conference

pounds he lost while in prison and during his escape.

He announced that he planned to wed a research assistant at Stanford University Laboratory, Marina Adamich of Belmont, Calif.

Lieutenant Dengler's remarks were censored at times when they touched on areas of security. A Navy spokesman said that the flier's information had been "extremely helpful" in training pilots to fly in Vietnam.

Had West German Passport

SAN DIEGO, Sept. 13 (UPI)—In his first meeting with newsmen since his escape, Lieutenant Dengler said today that he carried his former West German passport when he was captured to explain his German accent. He became a naturalized United States citizen Aug. 3, 1960.

He said he had been captured by the pro-Communist Pathet Lao forces on the Laotian side of the border and marched through villages until his captors reached the prison camp.

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Flier Tells Senators Of 6-Month Ordeal As P.O.W. of Hanoi

WASHINGTON, Sept. 15 (AP)—A German-born United States Navy flier who escaped from a North Vietnamese prison camp got a standing ovation from the Senate Armed Services Committee today.

Leading the applause was the Committee Chairman, Richard B. Russell, Democrat of Georgia, who invited Lieut. Dieter Dengler to tell of his six months of capture, torture and escape in order to give his "dauntless conduct the widest possible publicity."

The Senators cited him as an example for young Americans of courage and duty and urged that he travel around the country to tell his story. Harry F. Byrd Jr., Democrat of Virginia, put it this way:

"You dramatize what so many young Americans need to give attention to today — bravery, devotion to duty and love of freedom."

Lieutenant Dengler, a 28-year-old carrier pilot, told the Senators:

"You don't know what

freedom is unless you have escaped from Communist capture.

It was his first trip to Washington and he told the Senators he was "a 100 per cent American" and "I'm delighted to be here to see our Congress in action."

Lieutenant Dengler, who previously had told newsmen of his experience repeated for the Senators the story of how his attack plane was shot down in Laos, near the North Vietnamese border, Feb. 1. He was captured by Pathet Lao guerrillas, tortured in a vain effort to make him sign a statement denouncing United States activities and then held in a jungle prison camp until his escape.