

DEPARTMENT OF THE AIR FORCE
HEADQUARTERS UNITED STATES AIR FORCE
WASHINGTON, D.C.



USAFMPC (AFPMSC)
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3 June 1968

Dear Air Force Next of Kin

Since our last newsletter we have received new information on a number of different topics which we want to pass on to you.

The attached letter from Mr. Paul C. Warnke gives a good run-down on what the Department of Defense Prisoner of War Policy Committee has done since its formation last summer.

We want to assure you that the welfare and release of American prisoners will be given a high priority in peace talks between the United States and North Vietnam. Ambassador Harriman, who heads the American delegation, has worked tirelessly over the past two years in behalf of missing and captured personnel and has an excellent background in this subject.

During 1967, the already limited flow of letters from prisoners in North Vietnam decreased sharply. Nearly all letters received by the next of kin were brought out by American peace groups and other visitors. As this pattern became clear, our government brought diplomatic and other pressure on North Vietnam to allow a larger mail flow. In February 1968, Air Force next of kin received the largest number of letters from prisoners ever received during any one month period. All letters appeared to have been forwarded directly from Hanoi through international mail channels. Our government will continue to press for adequate mail facilities for all prisoners in Southeast Asia.

Earlier this year, the American Red Cross (ARC) sent a communication to the North Vietnamese Red Cross asking its cooperation in an effort to provide medical aid to sick or wounded American prisoners. The ARC offered to send relief packets of medical items which could be used by the prisoners. Up to this date, no reply has been received.

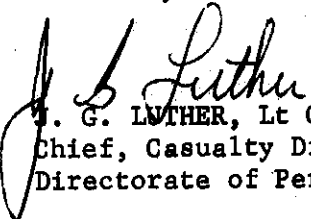
The International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC) has continued to make numerous inspection visits to prisoner of war camps administered by South Vietnam. Such visits include private conversations with prisoners, inspections by a doctor, and checks on conditions of treatment. The ICRC also visited captured North Vietnamese seamen before three of them were returned to Hanoi on 29 March 1968. Neither the Hanoi authorities nor the Viet Cong have permitted visits by the ICRC or any other neutral intermediary to Americans or other prisoners.

From time to time, prisoner films are shown on television. The films are purchased by the networks from private sources and are normally aired on the major news shows, such as Huntley-Brinkley and Walter Cronkite. We have asked the networks to please let us know in advance when such a film is to be shown so that we can advise concerned next of kin to watch. Many times they have passed this information on to us, but, unfortunately, there have been instances where they have not. We have also asked the networks to release copies of prisoner films to us so that we can forward them to bases near concerned next of kin for viewing. Generally, the networks will not release copies until after the films have been broadcast. To expedite matters, the Air Force is now copying films directly off the air at time of broadcast so that we can be more responsive in getting them to the bases for viewing by the next of kin.

There have been several instances where relatives of our missing or captured personnel have called my office at Randolph and have asked to speak to me or to Major Gratch, Chief of the Missing Persons Branch. When we are here, we are very happy to talk and give you any information we can. On many occasions we are out of the office, sometimes for a considerable period of time. Major Gratch has two highly qualified assistants, Major Carleton and Mrs. Beckner, who can help you when we are not available. Both of these people have a great deal of experience with the problems of the next of kin and are thoroughly familiar with each case. They will be glad to help you and you should have no hesitation in asking them your questions concerning your missing or captured relative. If your question relates specifically to a casualty assistance problem, such as benefits, movement of household goods, and the like, you should contact your local casualty assistance officer. If he cannot resolve your problem, he will contact either Lt Colonel Gaberman, Chief of the Casualty Assistance Branch, or his assistant, Master Sergeant Morgan.

Well, that about covers it for this newsletter. We will continue to advise you of new developments as quickly as possible.

Sincerely


J. G. LUTHER, Lt Colonel, USAF
Chief, Casualty Division
Directorate of Personnel Services

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Ltr from Mr. Warnke