

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



REPLY TO
ATTN OF:

USAFMPC (AFPMSC)
RANDOLPH AFB TEXAS 78148

7 OCT 1969

Dear Air Force Next of Kin

On 17 September 1969, a resolution was introduced in the House of Representatives relative to the treatment of American prisoners of war (PWs) by North Vietnam, and a large contingent of next of kin of all services witnessed the proceedings. The resolution is designed to show that the Congress is acutely aware of the plight of missing in action (MIA) personnel and PWs and to arouse world opinion and universal support to secure compliance by North Vietnam with the Geneva Convention. We are furnishing you a copy of the Congressional Record for that date which you may keep.

From time to time, we receive requests from members of Congress for the names and addresses of the next of kin residing in their states or congressional districts. In view of the recent publicity focusing more attention on and support for actions being taken in behalf of our downed personnel, these requests can be expected to increase. Therefore, the Department of Defense has asked that we determine which next of kin agree to our providing this information to their Congressmen and which family members prefer that we not. It must be understood that the names and addresses will only be furnished upon request from a member of Congress on a privileged basis with the understanding that they will not be used for any purpose without the consent of the families involved. If you desire that your name and address be made available to your Senator or Representative upon his request, it will not be necessary for you to advise us of your decision. However, should you prefer to maintain your anonymity, we ask that you notify us of this in writing by 24 October 1969. In the case of those whom we have not heard from by that date, we will assume that their permission has been given.

We continue to receive inquiries from the next of kin regarding the current status of the five Air Force officers, other than Captain Rumble, who have been released from captivity in North Vietnam. At the present time, one works in the military personnel system, with the additional duty of being responsible for determining assignments for future PW returnees; another is a line pilot in Aerospace Defense Command; still another is an air operations officer in the same command; and two are attending Air Command and Staff College. All are in good health and were returned to normal flying status. Captain Rumble, who is also in good health and on flying status, continues to receive processing in connection with his recent return to military control.

Local post offices do not retain change of address cards on file for more than two years. However, a new card may be completed prior to the expiration of that period. The new card will be retained for an additional two years. This can be done as many times as is necessary. In the event you have moved to an address not known to your MIA or captured relative, you should insure that a change of address card, which is less than two years old, is on file at the appropriate post office. This will facilitate the delivery of mail should the member be allowed to write from PW camp. As a safeguard, the Post Office Department has agreed to screen undeliverable mail from overseas areas at their Exchange Offices which are located at ports of entry throughout the United States. Mail which can be identified as originating from a PW and has been marked undeliverable will be forwarded through the Department of Defense to the casualty offices of the various services for onward processing to the next of kin concerned.

Many families have taken note of the apparent willingness of the North Vietnamese delegation in Paris to receive wives and other relatives inquiring about MIA personnel and PWs. We have talked with the first group of wives who visited Paris but are not yet in a position to give any specific advice. As you are probably aware, the North Vietnamese specified that they would receive visitors provided there was no involvement on the part of the US Government. Although the government does not feel this procedure is proper in view of the existence of established channels for exchange of such information, we do not intend to stand in the way of any family members who might decide to travel to Paris.

For travel to France, US citizens need only a valid passport; no visa is required. The nearest installation personal affairs officer can provide information on how to apply for a passport. Space-available travel aboard military aircraft outside the US is not authorized for this purpose, and travel and lodging must be at your own option and expense. If you need assistance while in Paris, you may contact Colonel P. Gorman, Assistant Military Advisor to the US Mission to the Talks on Vietnam through the US Embassy.

Those who have visited the North Vietnamese delegation so far have received no information about their MIA or captured husband. The North Vietnamese have stated they would "write to Hanoi" and let the wives know by letter what information was received. The visiting wives were also subjected to an extensive propaganda harangue which one wife described as a "harassing ordeal" and were advised by the North Vietnamese to "work to get the US out of Vietnam."

Another wife who visited the North Vietnamese delegation alone asked about her husband and about several friends who were also MIA. The North Vietnamese suggested that the wives of those pilots write the delegation asking

for information. This indicates that families may not be forced to travel to Paris but may write for information instead. It might be wise for families to try writing the following address before undergoing the expense of travel:

Mr. Xuan Oanh

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It will be necessary for you to identify the MIA or captured member fully, e.g., full name, grade and service number at the time the individual was downed, and his date of birth. In addition, you should include the date the member became MIA which is a matter of public record. If your relative was downed in North Vietnam, say so. If he was downed in Laos, we recommend you state that he was "downed by North Vietnamese forces in Southeast Asia," thus avoiding forcing the North Vietnamese to admit their involvement in the complex Laotian situation.

The above comments also apply to inquiries on behalf of MIA personnel and PWs in South Vietnam, except that letters should be addressed to:

Madame NGUYEN THI BINH

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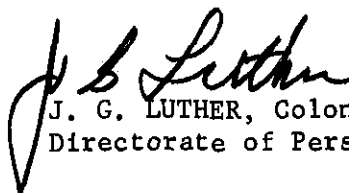
Although the National Liberation Front representatives have neither received relatives nor offered to reply to letters requesting information, it is possible they may follow the North Vietnamese lead in this regard. It certainly will do no harm to try, and it may be wise to include references to newspaper articles which have been widely circulated about the wives visiting the North Vietnamese.

The above information is provided because of the wide-spread interest in the matter on the part of our Air Force families. In no way should you construe our remarks as advising either for or against contact with the North Vietnamese in person or by mail. The Department of the Air Force and other agencies of government have insufficient information (as this is written) to come to any conclusion about the North Vietnamese objectives or possible plans for exploitation. If you do decide to contact the North Vietnamese or the National Liberation Front in person, proceed with utmost caution, and please advise us prior to your departure for Paris.

Over a period of time, various addresses have been accumulated which the next of kin could use in attempting to forward correspondence to our MIA personnel and PWs. All of the different addresses and associated instructions have been summarized and are attached.

We will continue to keep you informed of new developments in future newsletters.

Sincerely



J. G. LUTHER, Colonel, USAF
Directorate of Personnel Services

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1. Congressional Record of 17 Sep 69
2. Mail Procedures