

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



REPLY TO: USAFMPC (AFPMSC)
ATTN OF: RANDOLPH AFB TEXAS 78148

26 February 1969

Dear Air Force Next of Kin

This letter will update you on the developments that have occurred since our 14 December 1968 newsletter.

On 25 January 1969, Ambassador Lodge, head of the US delegation at the Paris talks, made clear the importance our government attaches to fast action on prisoner matters when he said at the talks:

"We seek the early release of prisoners of war on both sides so they can return to their homes and rejoin their families. We would be prepared to discuss this at an early date so as to arrange for the prompt release of prisoners held by both sides."

Our government's position is further emphasized by a message President Nixon sent in reply to a telegram he had received, urging that prisoner matters be given the highest priority in the Paris talks:

"I fully share your heartfelt concern for our prisoners. They have demonstrated their dedication and devotion to duty in the highest tradition of service to this nation. I assure you that the subject of their release and welfare will have an urgent priority in our talks in Paris.

With warmest personal regards.

Sincerely,

RICHARD NIXON"

Pending any agreement on a prisoner exchange, our government will continue to press for lists of names of prisoners, improvement in mail exchanges, and the assurance of humane treatment of prisoners which would be provided by visits to prisoner of war camps by representatives of the International Committee of the Red Cross.

Unhappily, only one letter was received from an Air Force prisoner in North Vietnam during the past two months. On the other hand, ten of our captured personnel were allowed to broadcast season's greetings to their families over Radio Hanoi. The messages were monitored and transcribed by the Foreign Broadcast Information Service, and immediately relayed to the families.

A few months before Christmas, some letters mailed to missing and captured members in North Vietnam were returned to the senders as undeliverable. Upon investigation, it was determined that the letters, although correctly addressed via the "Camp of Detention," had been misrouted in the mail system. Assurance was given us that the problem would be corrected; however, it soon became apparent that a number of letters were still being misrouted. After the matter was examined again, we were advised that the probable causes of the problem were the large volume of mail during the holiday season and the temporary, inexperienced employees hired to help process it. Additional corrective measures were then taken to insure the letters are properly routed. We apologize for any inconvenience or anxiety this may have caused you.

On 17 January 1969, the North Vietnamese informed our delegation in Paris that the Christmas packages forwarded to our personnel downed in that country had been received in Hanoi. Shortly thereafter, films and photographs from Japanese sources, carried by the news media in this country, showed a few American prisoners receiving packages. We consider this a breakthrough since previous attempts to forward Christmas packages have failed. It is our hope that all prisoners to whom packages were sent by their families have received them, though it is not possible to confirm this on the basis of present information. We know of no packages that have been returned to the senders. Unfortunately, there could be no Christmas package program for missing and captured members in South Vietnam and Laos because the Viet Cong and Pathet Lao continued to refuse to cooperate.

A policy change now permits dependent children (under 21 years of age) to accompany wives of missing and captured personnel on space available travel on military aircraft within the Continental United States (CONUS). As before, travel must be for humanitarian reasons. When requesting authorization in accordance with our previous instructions, the wife should state in her letter that the children will be accompanying her. Also, the children must have a Uniformed Services Identification and Privilege Card (DD Form 1173) if they are 10 years of age or older.

Another change in policy now allows foreign-born wives of missing and captured personnel and their accompanying dependent children (under 21 years of age) to travel space available to and from overseas. It is the intent of this change to permit wives in this category to visit relatives in their native land. Travel will be by Military Airlift Command aircraft and must be for humanitarian reasons. Requests will be considered on an individual basis. An eligible wife desiring such travel to her native land should write to Headquarters USAF (AFSTP), Washington, D.C., 20333, and furnish the following information:

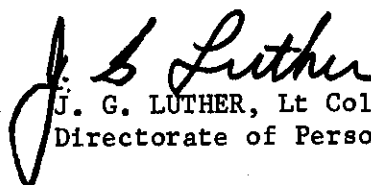
- a. Purpose of travel.
- b. Place of birth.
- c. Names and dates of birth of dependent children who will be accompanying her.
- d. Number on her Alien Registration Card (Immigration Form I-151) or, if naturalized, the date and place of naturalization.
- e. Country desired to visit.
- f. Dates of proposed travel.
- g. Place of residence of her parents.

After authorization for travel is granted, the travelers must proceed to the Passenger Terminal at the aerial port of embarkation serving the desired overseas destination. They must place their names on the space available roster, and await their turn for travel. They must also present the letter of approval from Headquarters USAF, together with a copy of the Report of Casualty (DD Form 1300) and Uniformed Services Identification and Privilege Card. All travelers must have a valid passport, US or foreign depending upon citizenship, which is appropriately visaed. Aliens must have their Alien Registration Card for re-entry into the US. Lastly, required immunizations must be current.

We emphasize that overseas space available travel can involve lengthy waiting periods for space to become available at both the CONUS and overseas aerial ports of embarkation. Also, billeting facilities for space available travelers at the aerial ports are usually extremely limited or completely unavailable. It is essential that travelers have sufficient funds to defray all expenses of the overseas trip to include the amount required to purchase return commercial transportation, if this becomes necessary.

That's it for this newsletter. We will continue to keep you posted on new happenings.

Sincerely


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