

CASE SYNOPSIS: HOLTZMAN, RONALD LEE

=====

Name: Ronald Lee Holtzman
Rank/Branch: Sergeant USA
Unit:
Date of Birth: 19 January 1946
Home City of Record: Whitepoint VA
Loss Date: 24 August 1967
Country of Loss: South Vietnam
Loss Coordinates: 141813N 1075140E
Status (in 1973): Missing In Action
Category: 4
Acft/Vehicle/Ground: UH1H
Other Personnel in Incident: Richard Allard; Kenneth B. Goff; Richard Schell (all missing); 4 others rescued; 1 rescued - died of injuries.

SYNOPSIS: Ronald Holtzman was one of nine persons aboard a UH1H helicopter on a routine patrol in South Vietnam on August 24, 1967. While flying over the Se San River about 10 miles southwest of the city of Kontum, the helicopter was caught in a severe downdraft and crashed into the river at a point where the current was swift and the water was deep. Five of the crew and passengers were rescued, though one died afterward of injuries from the crash. No trace was found of Holtzman and the three other men aboard the helicopter. The survivors could not provide any additional information on the fate of the four missing men, but it was thought that Holtzman was dead.

Richard Allard's mother received a collect call from Cambodia a few days after the crash by someone she believed was Richard. In 1970 she saw a prisoner on television in a Vietcong film which she believed was Richard. The Army was elusive in its conclusions on both events, so Mrs. Allard borrowed money from friends to go to Cambodia in January of 1972.

Through a series of events which belong in a spy novel, Mrs. Allard found herself in a cave where she was blindfolded and led into a bare room. An official and a soldier came in with her son. In the moments he was allowed to stay, he said, "Shame on you for coming." He apparently was afraid for his mother's safety. The Army later said they couldn't believe Mrs. Allard's account unless the Communists corroborated it in writing.

In 1969, a communist defector was shown a number of photographs of missing men. One of the photos he identified positively as being a prisoner of war was Richard Schell.

Clearly, all the evidence is not in on the events of August 24, 1967. Whether Allard and Schell were truly prisoners can only be known by Mrs. Allard, the defector, and of course, Allard and Schell themselves. What of Goff and Holtzman? What of the nearly 2500 others missing? What of the over 5000 reports of live Americans still in Southeast Asia? What are we doing to bring these men home? Nothing?