

## CHAPTER 15

# In Enemy Hands

*Combatants or Hostages?—Egress Recap and Other Contingencies—Operation Homecoming  
Welcome Home Marine—Code of Conduct—MIAs: The Joint Casualty Resolution Center*

---

### *Combatants or Hostages?*

By 1972, the return of missing and captured Americans in Southeast Asia had become a national objective for the United States. For the U.S. Marine Corps, this meant finding 136 missing Marines thought possibly to be in Communist captivity.<sup>1</sup> During 1972 alone, 24 Marines were lost in action from III MAF and only four of these returned as prisoners the next year.\* Other Americans, including Marines, had been saved from capture or loss by search and rescue missions; 232 individual recoveries were made during 1972, including the American advisors from the Quang Tri Citadel in May.\*\*

The Communists claimed they treated “enemy soldiers who have surrendered” with humanity. But a captured Marine’s probability of living or dying depended upon a number of circumstances, including his captor’s perception of the chances for evasion or escape and the immediate tactical situation. When captured, prisoners heard something like “You are now captured. We do not kill you. Just follow our command! We will have your arms tied up and take you to a safe place. Stand up and follow us right now!”<sup>2</sup> From then, the ordeal was essentially an individual experience.\*\*\*

Headquarters Marine Corps monitored the status of Marines in captivity and tracked them as individuals in both its Intelligence and Manpower Divisions. As near as could be determined, 48 of all the Americans known to have been captured in Southeast Asia were U.S. Marines. Of these, 9 died in captivity, 10 escaped, 2 were released prior to 1973, 26 returned

---

\*Missing Marines included nine in North Vietnam, eight in South Vietnam, and three in Laos. Most were aircrews.

\*\*The chance of successful rescue depended upon where an individual was “lost.” Only seven Americans were recovered from North Vietnam out of 149 American fixed-wing aircraft lost there in 1972. A total of 239 American and South Vietnamese fixed wing aircraft were lost in combat in Southeast Asia during 1972.

\*\*\*This chapter is intended to document the return of some of these men in 1973. Any complete narrative about their ordeals will have to be based on the debriefs conducted upon their return and take into account the diverse circumstances of captivity, release, and rank. These debriefs, along with the majority of material on prisoners, remain classified by executive order for privacy and security. (OASD [ISA] ltr, 3Jan87)

during Operation Homecoming, and 1—Private First Class Robert R. Garwood—returned in 1979.\*\*\*\*<sup>3</sup>

Individual conduct could not be evaluated while these men were prisoners, as the only information about them was dependent upon press reports and statements by visiting delegations to North Vietnam. Published stories or broadcasts by prisoners did not indicate the circumstances under which these statements were made. Prisoners were allowed to write a monthly letter, but most were never sent, except through “anti-war” groups favorable to the North Vietnamese.\*\*\*\*\*<sup>4</sup>

Over time, it became evident to the United States Government that the North Vietnamese were not abiding by the Geneva Convention and that not all American prisoners were living up to the U.S. Armed Forces Code of Conduct.\*\*\*\*\* The Communists re-

---

\*\*\*\*The first Marine prisoner was taken on 31 December 1964 and the last was captured on 26 September 1972.

\*\*\*\*\*Prisoners did not receive mail until the late 1960s, and by the war’s end only 13 relatives of Marine prisoners had received outgoing letters, nine from North Vietnam and four from South Vietnam.

\*\*\*\*\*The Code of Conduct was written and published after the Korean War to provide principles to follow while in captivity. It is neither law nor regulation. It reads:

I am an American fighting man. I serve in the forces which guard my country and our way of life. I am prepared to give my life in their defense.

I will never surrender of my own free will. If in command, I will never surrender my men while they still have the means to resist.

If I am captured, I will continue to resist by all means available. I will make every effort to escape and aid others to escape. I will accept neither parole nor special favors from the enemy.

If I am a prisoner of war, I will keep faith with my fellow prisoners. I will give no information or take part in any action which might be harmful to my comrades. If I am senior, I will take command. If not, I will obey the lawful orders of those appointed over me and will back them up in every way.

When questioned, should I become a prisoner of war, I am bound to give only name, rank, service number, and date of birth. I will evade answering further questions to the utmost of my ability. I will make no oral or written statements disloyal to my country and its allies or harmful to their cause.

I will never forget that I am an American Fighting Man, responsible for my actions, and dedicated to the principles which made my country free. I will trust in my God and in the United States of America.



Department of Defense Photo (USMC) A900175

*Conditions in confinement varied with location. In North Vietnam, prisons were administered by the Interior Ministry, with the prisoners exploited by the Army. This wartime picture shows two unidentified Americans working under guard in the north.*

refused to furnish complete listings of names or numbers of detained prisoners, refused inspection of prison camps by the International Red Cross, neither announced the locations nor otherwise marked prison camps, publically paraded American prisoners for propaganda purposes, allowed few prisoners to correspond with their next of kin, and tortured or otherwise coerced prisoners to make public confessions of criminal activity and anti-American statements. The Department of Defense concluded that "their captors could obtain a statement from any POW from whom they wanted one [and] all POWs made statements in one form or another."<sup>5</sup>

Before 1971, there had been three separate groups of Marine prisoners in Southeast Asia.\* In North Viet-

\*Locations where Marines were held and the nicknames given them by prisoners, were as follows (those with an asterisk were used during 1972-1973): Cambodia and border area; Tam Ky Complex (Camps I, II, I II), SVN; Hoa Lo (Hanoi Hilton-Camp Unity), NVN\*; Cu Loc (Zoo), NVN\*; Xom Ap Lo (Briar Patch), NVN; Thermal Power Plant (Dirty Bird), NVN; Son Tay (Camp Hope), NVN; Citadel (Plantation), NVN\*; Dan Hoi (Camp Faith), NVN; Bang Liet (Skid Row), NVN; Luong Lang (Dog Patch), NVN\*; Noi Coc (Rock Pile), NVN\*; Duong Ke (Farnsworth), NVN; Ba Cao (Bao Cao), NVN.

nam were 11 Marines, all aviators and officers, their average age 30 years at time of capture. Some spent up to eight years in captivity, with 5.2 the mean. Two groups were captured in South Vietnam. These Marines were younger, mostly enlisted men, and subject to a higher death rate in captivity.<sup>6</sup> They were confined in temporary camps in South Vietnam, Cambodia, and Laos for up to two and a half years. Most were moved to camps in North Vietnam by 1971.

The "Southern Group" in MR 1 suffered the highest death toll of all as the result of harsh living conditions, rather than maltreatment during indoctrination and interrogation. The Communists originally kept about two dozen allied prisoners in a variety of jungle locations in the "Tam Ky Complex" of South Vietnam. The prisoners were confined in bamboo "tiger-cage" enclosures or were shackled to their "beds." Of 10 Marines in this group, one was killed trying to escape, one was released, one remained with the Communists, and five died of various causes related to malnutrition.\*\* Corporal Jose J. Anzaldua, Jr., of H&S Company 2/5, observed that the minute any one of his group quit, "he was as good as dead. There was

\*\*The Marine who stayed behind was PFC Robert R. Garwood.

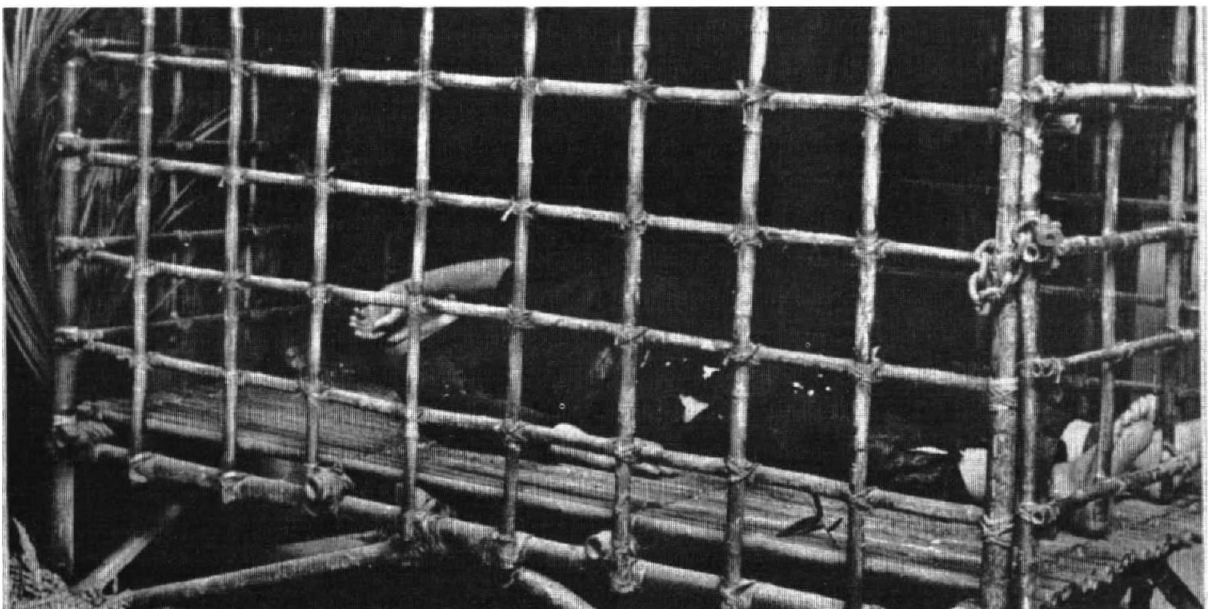


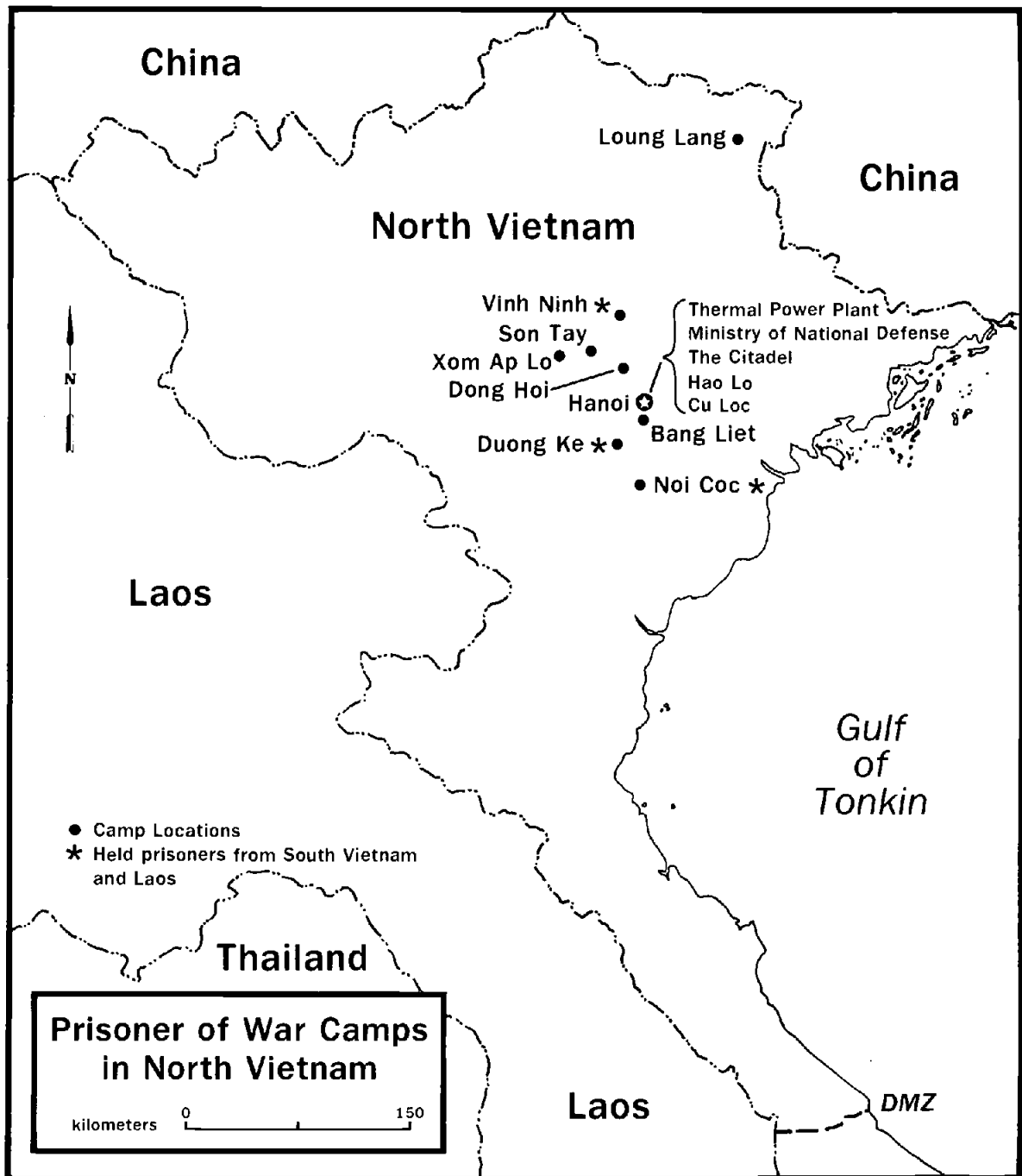
Marine Corps Historical Collection

*Interior of a prison cell in North Vietnam, late in the war. Bedding and possessions were stowed in a prescribed manner in otherwise barren surroundings. Unannounced harassment searches and confiscations were conducted with frequency by the Communist guards.*

*This is a Defense Department mock-up in South Vietnam of a "tiger cage," used during the war to illustrate conditions of temporary confinement including leg-iron shackles.*

Photo courtesy of LCdr Francis C. Brown, USN





no retrieving a man once he despaired.”<sup>7</sup> Only 12 of these allied prisoners reached North Vietnam in 1971, where they were known as “The Dirty Dozen” by the other Americans already held in the North.

According to First Lieutenant Bruce R. Archer of HMM-165, the prisoners were forced to maintain a six-day week consisting of identical morning and even-

\*Ranks used in text are as of time of capture.

ing schedules. A bell woke them up at the break of dawn, when “we were then required to fold up our gear neatly. The prisoners were taken out of their cells one at a time to dump their toilet buckets, brush their teeth, and were then locked up again.” Meals were a big event of the day, if lacking in quality and quantity.

At times, food consisted of two daily meals, one largely of rice and squash soup, the other of pork fat.

Archer continued, "In the South we were eating chicken, some kind of vegetable soup and rice. In North Vietnam, after we settled into our camp site, they started feeding us bread. We were getting a bowl of soup and a hard roll twice a day, with plenty of water."<sup>8</sup> Captain Paul J. Montague, also from HMM-165 and captured with Archer, commented that the situation was actually worse. In the early years, "meat of any sort was only given to us in minute pieces, if any at all."<sup>9</sup> Another prisoner wrote that in South Vietnam he was fed "manioc, bamboo, and salt water and so was the camp commander."<sup>10</sup> The diet was so lacking in basic vitamins and protein that survival was a wonder. Corporal Anzaldua remembered that the "only protein we had consisted of an occasional rat, lizard, or snake we could catch with our hands."<sup>11</sup> Common to all prisoners at release was a weight loss of 45 to 60 pounds.

An overall death rate of 15 percent occurred, with those surviving being healthier than expected when examined upon release.<sup>12</sup> Medical care by the North Vietnamese was limited. Marines suffered from mal-

nutrition, malaria, dysentery, beri-beri, open sores, rashes, typhoid, dental problems, ejection injuries, and psychological stress.<sup>13</sup> All suffered from nutritional deficiencies, torture, filthy living conditions, and solitary confinement.

The American raid on the empty prison camp at Son Tay marked the start of major changes in how the North Vietnamese treated their prisoners. The raid demonstrated that the Americans could enter North Vietnam at will and were determined to get their countrymen back. As a result of this and other considerations, the Communists improved conditions, diet, and treatment. Most of the dispersed and isolated prisoners were eventually confined at the Hoa Lo Prison (Hanoi Hilton) complex. Men were brought together who had not seen another American in years; they now lived 30 to 50 men confined to a room.

When Captains Orson G. Swindle III of Marine Wing Headquarters Group and Lawrence V. Friese of Marine Aircraft Group (MAG) 12 arrived following a suffocating ride in a refrigerator truck, they found scrawled on a cell door "Marine Corps Barracks Hanoi."

*Meals in the north were lacking in basic vitamins and protein, but most were at least routinely issued. In the south, this depended entirely upon what the local Communists had available for food themselves. If they did not eat, the prisoners also starved.*

Marine Corps Historical Collection



With their concentration thus focused at one place, the prisoners were able to organize and resist to a greater degree. The prisoners needed psychologically to exhibit group solidarity and to interact with each other to overcome the guilt feelings caused by their inevitable breakdowns under torture. Based on the main points of the Code of Conduct, the system that evolved stressed: (1) Do not condemn, deny, or say anything detrimental about the United States or its allies or their cause; (2) Do not give aid or comfort to the enemy; and (3) Do not accept special favors, including parole.<sup>14</sup>

The object was to continue the war against the Vietnamese Communists by denying them the ability to use the prisoners as hostages or for propaganda purposes. Within the limitations of confinement, the prisoners had evolved over the years from helpless hostages at the mercy of their captors to organized combatants in a war of wills. Lieutenant Colonel Harlan P. Chapman, of MAG-13, noted that this was of a "joint service nature" and there was a senior ranking officer "for each room, each building, and for the camp. Date of rank was important but it did not matter what branch of service."<sup>15</sup> For example, Major John H. Dunn, of MAG-11, established these policies while senior officer at Son Tay under the acronym of *Blades*: "Bitch constantly about necessities, luxuries bitch about occasionally, absurdities debunk, discourage propaganda, everyone participates, select what is to be bitched about individually."<sup>16</sup> Techniques used to resist included the discouragement of visits by family members, the refusal to view live entertainment, the resistance to Vietnamese-sponsored holidays, the celebration of American holidays, the stopping of recreation that was viewed by Vietnamese-sponsored delegations, and the refusal to comment during interrogation on any subject except personal needs.<sup>17</sup>

As Linebacker air attacks on the North increased in May 1972, the NVA moved more than 200 prisoners to Luong Lang near the Chinese border. At the same time, the North Vietnamese used groups of prisoners to denounce the resumption of air bombardment with statements and broadcasts, this included the "Peace

\*Prisoner resistance was all that could be accomplished under the circumstances, but was isolated and individual in nature until late in the war. LtCol Swindle recalled that the standards of conduct for Marines in the North were set by Chapman, Dunn, and Frederick. (Swindle comments) VAdm James B. Stockdale, the senior naval service officer held in captivity, takes exception to the concept of a "4th Allied POW Wing," which he regarded as a publicity device after the fact. (Stockdale comments)



Marine Corps Historical Collection  
*American prisoners were put on display for visiting delegations, for example when American actress Jane Fonda arrived in Hanoi on 8 July 1972. Along with meeting the prisoners, touring bombed areas, and making radio broadcasts, Fonda visited with NVA anti-aircraft crews where this photograph was taken.*

Committee" or "Outer Seven" group of prisoners.\*\* They were called this by other prisoners for their separate treatment by, and cooperation with, the Communists. Associated with them were two officers, VMFA-323's Lieutenant Colonel Edison W. Miller and Navy Captain Walter E. Wilber.<sup>18</sup> Miller later wrote, "I most certainly did, during the last three years of my confinement, express my views on the Vietnam War. It has not changed. The prosecution of the Vietnam War has to be one of the major mistakes of our country . . ." <sup>19</sup>

Renewed air action also resulted in new prisoners arriving. On 11 June 1972, Captain William K. Angus of VMA(AW)-224 was captured when his A-6 was hit by ground fire during a bombing run. North Vietnamese subjected him to brutal interrogation, with the same results as with earlier prisoners: despair and guilt for going beyond the "big four"\*\*\* under tor-

\*\*These were Sp4 Michael P. Branch, USA; SSgt Robert P. Chenoweth, USA; SSgt James A. Daly, Jr., USA; Pvt Frederick L. Elbert, Jr., USMC; Sgt Able L. Kavanaugh, USMC; SSgt King D. Rayford, Jr., USA; SSgt Alfonso R. Riate, USMC; and SSgt John A. Young, USA.

\*\*\*Name, rank, serial number, and date of birth being the only four questions a prisoner was required to answer for his captors.



ture.<sup>20</sup> But to the men who had remained in the north for so long, it seemed these newcomers brought attitudes that threatened those held by earlier prisoners.\* Major Leo Thorsness, USAF, felt that these men had been on college campuses in the 1960s, when he had been taken prisoner, and they "were not hard-core resisters." They asked him, "Why in the world should we be tortured to say things that everybody in the states is already saying?"<sup>21</sup>

This last year of captivity for the prisoners also saw tragic hardships. During July 1972, the Luong Lang camp suffered a typhoid epidemic due to the crowded and unsanitary conditions. One of those who died was Chief Warrant Officer John W. Frederick, Jr., of MAG-11, who had survived seven years of confinement.

That same month, a group of prisoners met with actress Jane Fonda and later in August with former U.S. Attorney General Ramsey Clark, meetings that were staged for newsmen.\*\* One prisoner who met with them at that time explained, "I had no idea who she was, but every young officer in the camp (The Zoo) I was in at the time, viewed her as a sex symbol and wanted to see her."<sup>22</sup> This, and other incidents, brought accusations of American prisoners cooperating with the Communists, accusations a court of law never resolved.<sup>23</sup>

One Marine prisoner concluded after his release that not everyone resisted to the best of his abilities. Corporal Jose J. Anzaldúa felt that some prisoners put together peace statements for the enemy in exchange for better treatment or a few paltry privileges, a little more food or a few cigarettes. "I tried to think of them simply as 'weak sisters' but ultimately I hated them — and I hate them still. Beyond a certain point no man's fear or suffering was greater than another's. We all had the same choices."<sup>24</sup>

\*VAdm Stockdale commented that the years of "heavy" torture were prior to 31 March 1968. After that, he felt that it was continued by the North Vietnamese against those against whom they still had grudges. A greater threat was from the early-release offers. By 1 December 1971, "all torture was a thing of the past." (Stockdale comments)

\*\*On 13 July 1972, a group of 16 American prisoners made statements denouncing the war. Jane Fonda also made broadcasts on Radio Hanoi that were heard by American forces at the time, including Marine units. This led an unknown Marine with VMEA-333 to quip: "Guess the end-of-the-cruise date and win a date with Jane." On 9 August 1972, Clark broadcast over Radio Hanoi that there "is no excuse for bombing North Vietnam," but appealed for the release of prisoners of war. At the time, he was a member of the Stockholm-based International Commission of Inquiry on war crimes in Indochina. (Vietnam Comment File)

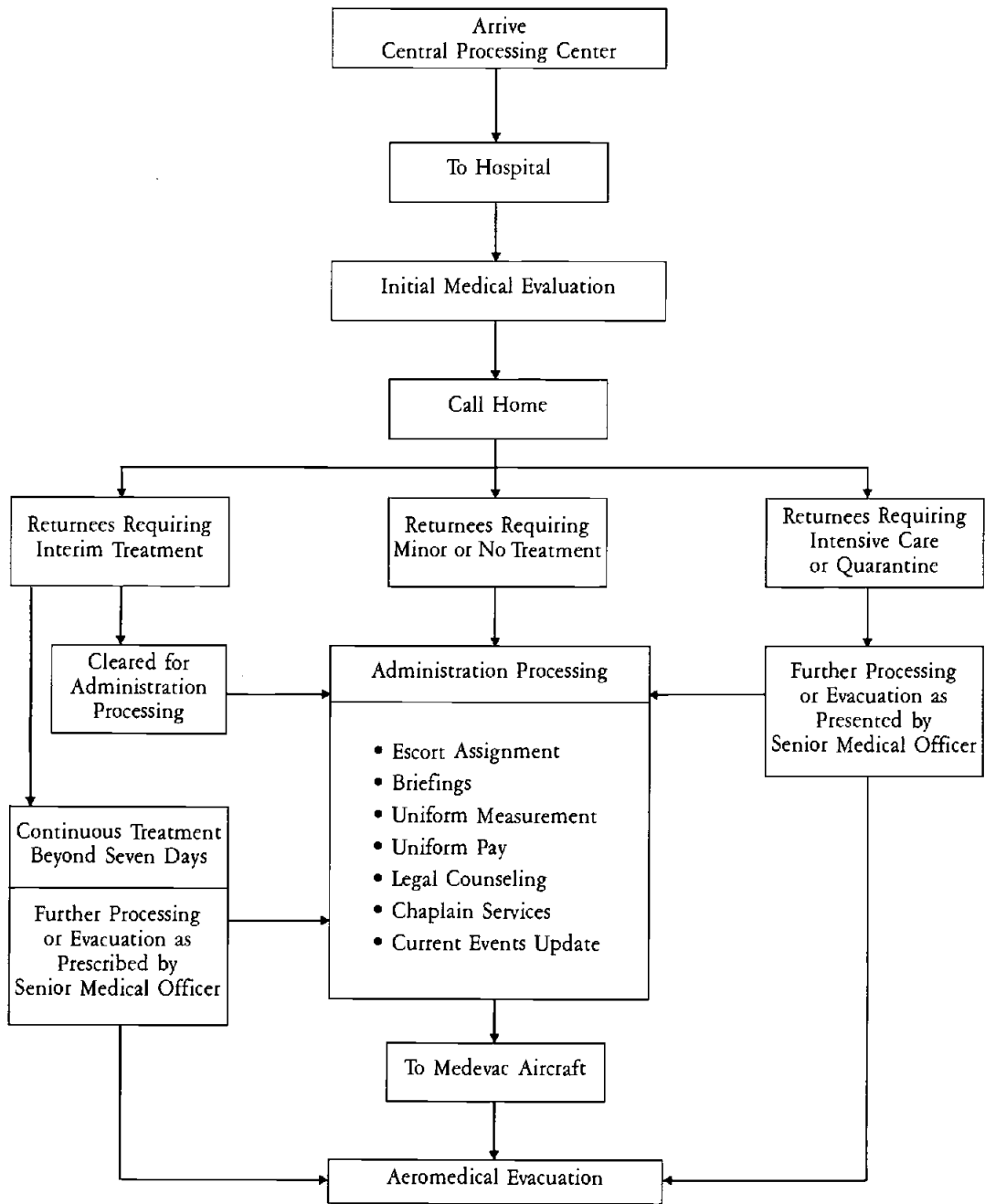
### *Egress Recap and Other Contingencies*

Active prisoner-recovery operations, including contingencies for prisoners in North Vietnam continued through the end of the war and beyond. The Deputy Director for Operations of the Joint Chiefs of Staff began a special operations project that envisioned the recovery of American prisoners from Hanoi. Lieutenant General Hugh J. Elwood, the Deputy Chief of Staff for Plans and Programs at HQMC, assigned Colonel William J. Davis as the Marine Corps action officer and representative. Project planners proposed operations using U.S. Army and U.S. Marine Corps forces to rescue prisoners from the enemy capital. These concepts remained in the planning stage because of the success of military operations in South Vietnam and negotiations in Paris.<sup>25</sup>

In 1972, Major William B. Clark was the Headquarters Marine Corps action officer concerned with monitoring status of captured Marines when a special Department of Defense prisoner task force formed. In August 1972, he attended the DOD/CinCPac planning conference on recovery contingencies. He reported back to the Assistant Chief of Staff, G-1, that a great deal of meaningful and productive action had taken place since the previous World Wide Conference on Prisoners of War. In his opinion, there were "processing sites ready and waiting with every conceivable problem examined," medical, personnel, and personal files were on station and up to date, next of kin telephone procedures were established, security precautions taken, public affairs press guidance promulgated, and casualty transportation to the United States laid on.<sup>26</sup>

The task force on the prisoners-of-war and missing-in-action was headed by Dr. Roger E. Shields from the office of the Assistant Secretary of Defense for International Security Affairs. During Operation Homecoming he dealt directly with CinCPac and the Services. These efforts were coordinated under a Pacific Command plan known as Egress Recap, later renamed Operation Homecoming.<sup>27</sup> This called for a three-phase operation and delegated responsibility among the Services. Phase one and phase two were controlled by the Homecoming Operations Center at Pacific Command's headquarters in Hawaii. Phase one was the recovery of the prisoners by Thirteenth Air Force from the Communists. Phase two was their processing at an intermediate facility, the Joint Homecoming Reception Center (JHRC) at Clark Air Force Base, Philippines. Phase three was the return of these Americans to the United States, as the respon-

## Homecoming Reception Sequence





sibility of the individual services.<sup>28</sup> In addition, the U.S. delegation to the Four Party Joint Military Commission established by the ceasefire agreement had a two-man POW liaison division provided by MACV.<sup>29</sup>

More than 2,880 American government and military personnel were involved with the first two phases of Homecoming, which directly involved 62 Marines. The III MAF Marines worked within the organizational framework of the Joint Homecoming Reception Center at Clark Air Force Base, Philippines, to include the command post, base hospital, Joint Debriefing and Casualty Reporting Center, Joint Reception and Support Center, Joint Information Bureau, and the Quick Reaction Team/Reception Support Team. Military Airlift Command and the Pacific Air Force provided aircraft support. Air Force Lieutenant General William G. Moore described the command post as "the hub of all activity" for the command element, the Service deputy site commanders and State Department team chief, and representatives of key support agencies.<sup>30</sup>

Marine Corps participation in Operation Homecoming ranged from the prisoners themselves to Marine action officers in Washington, D.C. Major General Michael P. Ryan, then Commanding General, III MAF, assigned Colonel John W. Clayborne as his representative with the Joint Homecoming Reception Center at Clark. There he was a service deputy JHRC commander, under General Moore. Colonel Clayborne headed the Marine contingent of 32 officers and 28 enlisted men who comprised the Marine Processing Team at Clark and the escort team on board the Military Airlift Command aircraft. The III MAF team began operations on 13 December 1972 when Major John J. Burton reported to Clark as the III MAF liaison officer, assisted by Staff Sergeant Thomas W. Bohnenkamp, an administrative chief, and Master Sergeant Fred A. Norvell, the Camp Butler uniform custodian. Planning and briefings continued with the Air Force, as well as with Brigadier General Paul G. Graham's 9th MAB and 31st MAU for Homecoming Afloat if it was necessary to transport the returnees by sea rather than by air.<sup>31</sup>

On 26 December 1972, the prisoners at The Citadel moved to Hoa Lo Prison. Indication of a prisoner exchange came to the Americans in North Vietnam when lists of prisoners by the date of capture were arranged to establish the order in which prisoners were released. In January 1973, the "Dirty Dozen" prisoners of the MR 1 group were also moved to Hoa Lo and joined the other Hanoi prisoners for release. For Cor-

poral Anzaldúa the word of the pending relief came in formation with the other prisoners in the main yard of the prison. The camp commander, speaking through an interpreter, told them "You will be released in 30 days." There was no visible response from the assembled prisoners: "No one believed him, for all we knew it was a trick," stated Anzaldúa, "We dared not hope. We were beyond hope."<sup>32</sup>

When the ceasefire agreement was imminent, the JCS Chairman, Admiral Thomas H. Moorer, notified the Pacific Command that during "the next 60 days the most important single event will be the return of our prisoners of war."<sup>33</sup> The recovery and accountability of Americans held by the Communists in Southeast Asia had become a national objective and a specific goal of negotiation with the North Vietnamese. At this point the prisoners were the only leverage the Communists could exert, and President Nixon personally followed the daily progress of the prisoner release and final troop withdrawals.<sup>34</sup>

The prisoner release was dependent upon the removal of U.S. naval mines from North Vietnamese waterways, the withdrawal of remaining U.S. forces from South Vietnam, and the exchange of some 5,000 South Vietnamese and 26,508 Communist prisoners.<sup>35</sup> Under the terms of the Vietnam Agreement, the internationally supervised ceasefire went into effect throughout South and North Vietnam at 0800 Saigon time, 28 January 1973. Within 60 days all American prisoners and remaining military forces would leave Vietnam, and 23,335 Americans, 35,396 Koreans, and 113 other allies were to withdraw.<sup>36</sup> It also began the long-awaited recovery of American prisoners from Hanoi. Homecoming was no longer a plan, it was operational.

#### *Operation Homecoming*

In order to support around-the-clock processing of men in transition from Communist to American control, a facility was established and manned by the Services to provide medical, financial, psychological, and humanitarian support. On 28 January 1973, these reception stations were manned at the announcement of the names of the Americans to be released. Included were the names of 26 Marine returnees, and eight others who had died in captivity. When the JHRC was activated, it was believed that the prisoners would be released in roughly equal groups at 15-day intervals.

Families were notified, records were audited, and current promotions, awards, and uniforms were on hand to be issued upon the prisoners' arrival at Clark



Department of Defense Photo (USMC) A900055  
*Upon release, prisoners were issued civilian clothing and toilet articles and driven to Hanoi's Gia Lam Airport for transfer to awaiting American reception teams. In a study in contrasts, an American prisoner pans the camera over the shoulder of a North Vietnamese.*

Air Force Base. Representatives from the various Services were assigned to each pickup aircraft; however, they were not escorts for specific returnees. Marine escorts were assigned to each Marine returnee to accompany him to the JHRC and then to the United States.<sup>37</sup> The processing at the JHRC was designed to allow a smooth transition of the returnees back into the Marine Corps. Information was provided to bring the Marines up to date on the events of the last few years, and to allow them to make contact with their families.

As February 1973 began, prisoners in Hanoi began the transfer to their final holding facility, known as "Showplace" because the Vietnamese made efforts to improve the condition and appearance of prisoners prior to release. Operation Homecoming had started for them at last. One of the prisoner leadership's last instructions was the "Go Home Guidance." These provided specifics on "dress, press, debrief, violators." The prisoners used military formations to display pride and dignity. Any emotionalism or arrogance was kept in check. Priority for release were the sick or wounded, enlisted men, civilians, and officers in order of capture. But, this was ultimately controlled by the Communists. An experience that began for a diverse group of individuals ended as a unifying event.<sup>38</sup>

On 12 February 1973, the first phase began with

the release of 116 prisoners at Gia Lam Airfield in North Vietnam and 19 prisoners in South Vietnam who left from Saigon. These first groups included three Marines from the north and Captain James P. Walsh from the south. Other prisoners were released from the same locations and from the British Crown Colony of Hong Kong. In accordance with the provisions of the Agreement and Protocol, transactions were observed by teams from the Four Party Joint Military Commission and the International Commission of Control and Supervision.

As the first prisoners were transferred from their Vietnamese bus, their way to the aircraft was blocked by newsmen. However Air Force plane crews pushed the newsmen aside and escorted the men to the waiting C-141. Colonel James R. Dennet, USAF, who headed the 18-man reception support team, reported, "One of the POWs told me that this was the high point of the whole operation."<sup>39</sup> Dennet was impressed with the discipline displayed as the former prisoners got off the bus at Hanoi: "The senior man took charge and marched them to the turnover point. Some were limping, but there was full control." The releases that followed were based upon agreements reached in Paris and on the spot in North Vietnam. Delays in negotiations at exchange sites made subsequent releases irregular. In all, 20 MAC flights by C-141s and C-9s were used to bring the men to the Philippines. When the last flights arrived, 591 Americans and nine foreign nationals had been repatriated.\*

After arriving in the Philippines, the former prisoners began the next phase of Homecoming. Processing began with an initial medical examination. The returned Marines were then debriefed. The purpose of this was to determine the status of the remaining prisoners and to elicit information on missing persons who may have been encountered in captivity.<sup>40</sup> Captain William C. Howey led the five-man debrief team and recalled that the actual debriefs began on 13 February 1973 with Lieutenant Colonel John H. Dunn and Lieutenant Colonel Harlan P. Chapman.\*\* Lieutenant Colonel Edison W. Miller "was not debriefed by direction of FMFPac."<sup>41</sup> Returnees then met their escorts, received personal information briefings on their home situations, met with a chaplain (if desired),

\*Marines were released on 12 February 1973 and on 5, 14, 16, 27, and 28 March.

\*\*LtCol Howey commented that it took an estimated 45 man-hours to process the Dunn and Chapman debriefs to collate, cross-check, and verify names mentioned. Other prisoners were specifically designated to serve as "name memory banks" for the prisoners.



Department of Defense Photo (USMC) A900040

*Prisoners lined up for release on 27 March 1973 at the airport. Marines pictured among the 27 returnees freed that day were Sgt Jose J. Anzaldua, fourth from the left, and Sgt Dennis A. Tèllier, second from the right. The bus was camouflaged as a defense against air attack.*

*The returnees maintained their composure until it was clear that they were again safe under American control. No one was silent as this Air Force C-141 Starlifter left the runway at Hanoi. The photographer, TSgt Robert N. Denham, USAF, observed that "You could hear the shouts and cheers all over the aircraft" on this 28 March 1973 flight.*

Department of Defense Photo (USMC) A9000163





Department of Defense Photo (USMC) A900042

*Arrival at Clark Air Force Base, Philippines, was at all hours of the day or night. Despite this, there were military and civilian well-wishers on hand to greet the returnees, in this case on a Military Airlift Command C-141 medical evacuation aircraft arriving from Hanoi.*

and called their families. Changes to initial hospital assignments were made at this time. After that, a post exchange call was made for necessities and measurement for uniforms in which to return home.<sup>42</sup>

The men were in a euphoric state that lasted throughout their stay at Clark. The returning Americans "were greeted by large crowds of well-wishers at the flight line and along the ambulance bus routes to the hospital."<sup>43</sup> These crowds of dependents and Service personnel from Clark were the returning prisoners' first indication that their experience was appreciated by their fellow citizens. The returning Marines adjusted promptly to eating a normal American diet. To Colonel Clayborne, surprisingly, "though subjected to the most primitive living conditions and cruelties, together with long years of imprisonment, [they] did not appear psychologically or mentally affected in most cases."<sup>44</sup> They were especially interested in the details of their capture and information about their units following their capture. Colonel Clayborne credited a strong prisoner unity with maintaining a sense of military discipline and providing the men a sense of purpose. Standing out in his recollections was the rapport between the Marine returnees and their escorts.<sup>45</sup>

Colonel Dennet had initial concerns for demonstrations against the North Vietnamese by the returning

prisoners. On 16 March 1973, Dennet was prepared for possible demonstrations against the United States from a group of 32 prisoners in Hanoi, including seven Marines, three of whom were charged with misconduct after their return.<sup>46</sup> His concern for this particular release was due primarily to the personalities among the returnees themselves, some "individuals in this group had been identified as having anti-war and most particularly anti-U.S. military sentiments." Captain Howey had received derogatory information about some of these returnees during his debriefing sessions and passed this information on to Colonel Clayborne, who informed Fleet Marine Force Pacific and Headquarters Marine Corps.<sup>47</sup>

The returnees were cleared for "medical evacuation" to the United States as soon as they were ready to go, an average of 68 hours of processing time. Thirty-six MAC C-141 flights were made to take all the men to Hawaii. The first Marine to arrive was Lieutenant Colonel Chapman, to be welcomed by the Commanding General of FMF Pacific, General Louis H. Wilson, Jr. Chapman was the Marine held the longest by the enemy, from his capture on 5 November 1965. General Wilson shook his hand and said, "Welcome back to the Marine Corps." Chapman replied, "Thank you, General, but I never left."<sup>48</sup> Others followed and this "process" continued until the arrival of Captain William K. Angus on 28 March 1973, the last Marine



prisoner out of North Vietnam. As Captain Angus boarded the aircraft that returned him to the United States he took the "salute of a formation of Marines who were enroute to Nam Phong."<sup>49</sup>

The third phase of Operation Homecoming began after notification of a Marine's return was sent to his family. The returnee was then assigned to one of seven naval hospitals.\* The returning Marines were given more intensive medical care and counseling. They were then debriefed further and given time to spend with families and friends to catch up on lost years. This was controlled by Headquarters Marine Corps, with a program called Operation Homecoming Marine. Headquarters formed a group under Brigadier General Edward A. Parnell for the Manpower Division. As in the preoperation planning, these action officers at Headquarters supervised the process with the assistance of the respective hospitals and with local Marine representatives.\*\*<sup>50</sup> They also had to assist the survivors of those Marines who were not coming home.

#### *Welcome Home Marine*

Chief Warrant Officer William E. Thomas, Jr., arrived at Naval Air Station, Miramar, California, at 1815 on 30 March 1973. The 36-year-old native of Pennsylvania had been serving as an air observer with Sub Unit One, 1st ANGLICO, when he was shot down near the Demilitarized Zone in 1972. At the time, he had been "controlling naval gunfire on enemy positions along Route 555" from an Air Force OV-10. He was escorted to the United States by Major John H. Messick, to Camp Pendleton, California. Previously Warrant Officer Thomas had met his wife and two children in Hawaii during a brief stopover at Hickam Air Force Base. Thomas recalled, "I arrived with Sgt Anzaldua. We (Joe and I) arrived late due to aircraft problems." A Marine Corps sedan and reception party drove them to the Camp Pendleton naval hospital where they were greeted by the base commander, Major General Herman Poggemeyer, Jr.; Major General John N. McLaughlin, Commanding General, 4th Marine Division, himself a former POW from the Korean War; and the hospital commander. Assigned to Operation

\*These were U.S. Naval Hospitals in Oakland, California; Camp Pendleton, California; Great Lakes, Illinois; St. Albans, New York; Bethesda, Maryland; Camp Lejeune, North Carolina; and Philadelphia, Pennsylvania. USNHs in San Diego, California, and Jacksonville, Florida, also participated.

\*\*Units involved were Marine Corps Base (MCB), Camp Pendleton, California; Marine Barracks, Great Lakes, Illinois; Marine Barracks, Brooklyn, New York; Marine Barracks, Jacksonville, Florida; Marine Barracks, Treasure Island, California; and MCB Camp Lejeune, North Carolina.

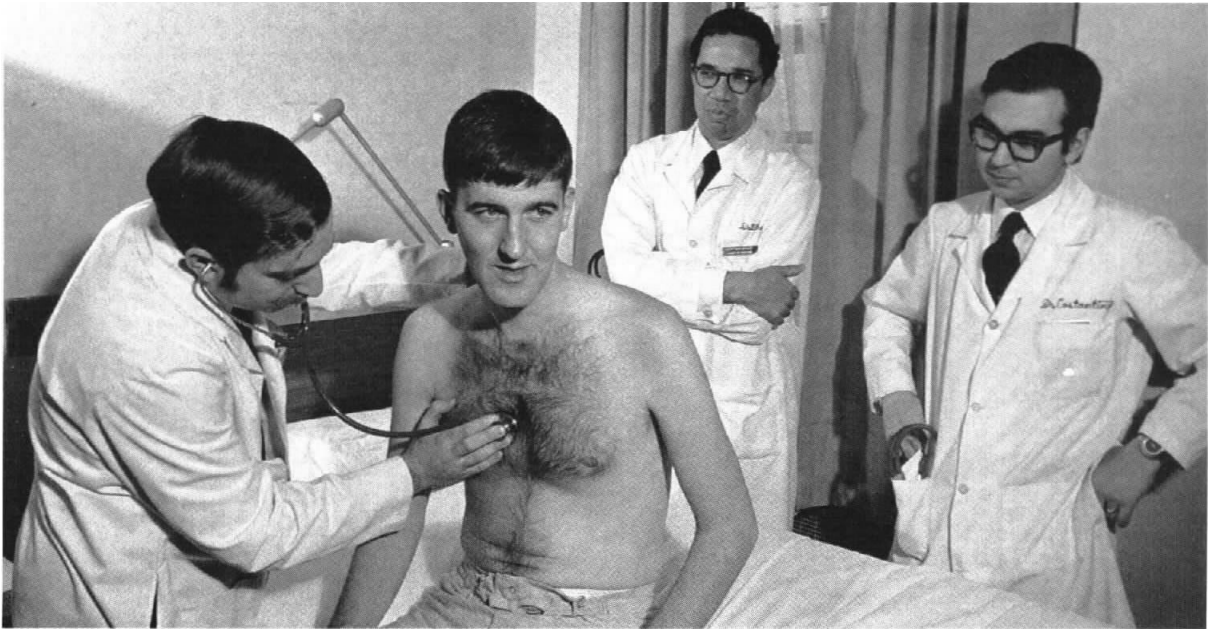


Department of Defense Photo (USMC) A26897  
*The first Marine to return to American soil was LtCol Harlan P. Chapman, foreground, after more than seven years in captivity. He was greeted on his arrival at Hickam Air Force Base, Hawaii, by LtGen Louis H. Wilson, Jr., commanding FMF Pacific. The flight arrived with 20 returnees from all three Armed Services.*

Homecoming Ward 22A, Warrant Officer Thomas was once again reunited with his family.

In the days that followed, Chief Warrant Officer Joseph A. Canonico and Sergeant William C. Westlund of the 1st Counterintelligence Team conducted detailed debriefings, in conjunction with medical and dental treatment. Decorations and awards were initiated or completed during this period, as well as administrative matters relating to pay and legal assistance. Family visits and liberty were authorized consistent with medical, administrative, and debriefing schedules. On 16 April 1973, Chief Warrant Officer Thomas conducted a press conference and began a 90-day convalescent leave.<sup>51</sup>

With variations in detail this same sequence was followed by the 25 other Marines who had returned during Homecoming. An important element of this program was the public relations exploitation of the returned Marines which allowed them to have press conferences, make public speaking engagements, and hold interviews designed to capitalize on the massive public response to their return. The Marines were welcomed home at the national level by the Commandant General Robert E. Cushman, Jr., and by President Nixon with a White House reception.<sup>52</sup>



Department of Defense Photo (USMC) A900028

*High among priorities for returnees was complete medical examinations, in this case, for Capt James P. Walsh, the last Marine captured during the war. He is undergoing a physical at the St. Albans Naval Hospital, New York, conducted by Capt Robert Bishop, USN.*

*"Welcome home, Marine!" heard from the Commandant of the Marine Corps. At Camp Pendleton, California, Gen Robert E. Cushman, Jr., promotes CWO3 William E. Thomas, Jr., in front of other returnees. In most cases, promotions waited several years to be presented, making some Marines several ranks senior to what they were when captured.*

Department of Defense Photo (USMC) A356477





White House Photograph E084822A

*The final phase of Operation Homecoming came at the White House with a reception by the Commander-in-Chief, President Richard M. Nixon. He is shown here addressing the returnees, backed by the Marine Band and its drum major on 24 May 1973.*

Shortly after the prisoners were returned, General Cushman received a letter from Douglas K. Ramsey that would focus his personal attention on a Marine Corps officer, a prisoner who had been dead for six years in Vietnam. Ramsey, a civilian language officer, had been held a prisoner by the Communists from 1966 until his release during Operation Homecoming in 1973. His letter told the story of Captain Donald G. Cook, USMC.<sup>53</sup> Captain Cook went to Vietnam as an observer from Communications Company, Headquarters Battalion, 3d Marine Division. He was assigned to the 4th Battalion of the Vietnamese Marines. On 31 December 1964 he was wounded and captured during fighting near Binh Gia, Phuoc Thy Province, in III Corps.<sup>54</sup> Cook was held prisoner by the Viet Cong until his death. The 33-year-old native of New York and father of four set an example of courage and conduct in the face of the enemy.

Held in various camps in South Vietnam near the Cambodian border, Cook reportedly assumed a rigid adherence to the Code of Conduct that won him the respect of his fellow prisoners and his Communist captors. Observed a fellow prisoner, after a 14-day forced march to a new camp, Captain Cook's determination

and fortitude "was commended by the VC camp commander . . . like a physicist being praised by Einstein."<sup>55</sup> Although seriously ill, Cook refused to allow other prisoners to carry him or his pack. He set the example for others by assuming leadership, nursing the sick, sharing his rations, organizing the prisoners, attempting to escape, and resisting the Vietnamese at every turn. The strain of this effort eventually cost him his life. Fellow prisoners believed "that Cook could have negotiated his own early release, had he been willing to pay the price of a signed statement or tape" against the United States' policy in Vietnam. Captain Cook's 1967 death from malaria was announced to other prisoners as his having "gone to a camp rather far from here." The North Vietnamese finally notified the American government of Captain Cook's death in 1973 during Operation Homecoming.\*

The return of Marine prisoners also brought disciplinary action for some. Rear Admiral James B. Stockdale, the senior naval officer in captivity, was met the day after his arrival at Clark Air Force Base by CinC-

\*He was declared legally dead by the Department of Defense on 26 February 1980. On 16 May 1980 Colonel Donald G. Cook's widow received his Medal of Honor from Secretary of the Navy Edward Hidalgo.



Pac's Rear Admiral Earl P. Yates. A telephone call made in Stockdale's name to the Chief of Naval Personnel in Washington, D.C., concerning Navy Captain Walter E. Wilber and Marine Lieutenant Colonel Edison W. Miller, demanded that they be moved for their own safety as there "are released ex-prisoners who don't want to be in the same hospital with them."<sup>56</sup>

The telephone call appeared to have been motivated by the fact of Miller and Wilber being on the first flight out of Hanoi, which Stockdale felt "may not have been either Miller's idea, or the North Vietnamese's." Colonel Clayborne's opinion was that Wilber and Miller were on the initial plane because of North Vietnamese control and manipulation of the process. Reasons proposed for this were for the Communists to "get some favorable media exposure" or as "a gesture of contempt" to continue to exploit division among the returnees.<sup>57</sup> In regards to his release date, though he was one of the more seriously injured returnees, Miller said he had declined early repatriation, but was told with the others by the North Vietnamese that "we would all leave the country when told to."<sup>58</sup> At this point, CinCPac and Washington's concern was to move Miller and Wilber out as soon as pos-

*The first Marine captured during the war, Col Donald G. Cook, never returned. His experience remained untold until Operation Homecoming brought back fellow prisoners whose recounting gained him the Medal of Honor. He is pictured as a captain, the rank he held at the time of his capture in 1964 in South Vietnam.*

Marine Corps Historical Collection



sible. Stockdale observed that there "are a lot of loose ends here . . ."<sup>59</sup>

In June 1973, Admiral Stockdale brought charges against these same two officers, in accordance with the Secretary of Defense's policy that charges against returnees would have to be brought by other former prisoners. They were charged with conspiracy to solicit mutiny, solicitation of mutiny, mutiny, violation of orders, communications with the enemy, and urging others to cooperate with the enemy.<sup>60</sup> Stockdale recalled these charges had been drafted by the Judge Advocate General of the Navy, based in part on some 50 depositions collected by the Naval Investigative Service from returnees.<sup>61</sup> Miller stated that "my critics have preferred as much anonymity and distance as possible" and that Admiral Stockdale "has never spoken with me or met me."<sup>62</sup>

Air Force Lieutenant Colonel Theodore Guy brought charges of misconduct against eight enlisted men under him as the senior ranking officer at The Citadel. Three Marines and five soldiers were accused. The Marines were Staff Sergeant Alfonso R. Riate, Sergeant Able L. Kavanaugh, and Private Frederick L. Elbert, Jr. All were accused of making propaganda statements, cooperating with the enemy, disobedience of orders, attempting to persuade others to disobey orders, and wrongfully communicating with the enemy about other prisoners.<sup>63</sup> Sergeant Kavanaugh committed suicide soon after the charges were published.

A divergence of opinion existed among the prisoners, the Pentagon, the Services, and the White House on how this situation should have been handled.\* Secretary of the Navy John Warner ordered the Navy Judge Advocate General to conduct an investigation and Warner himself interviewed some 19 former prisoners and reached two separate determinations. On 3 July 1973, Secretary Warner dismissed the charges against the enlisted Marines; on 27 September 1973, he dismissed those against the officers. All of them received secretarial letters of censure.\*\* In October 1973, Secretary Warner dropped additional charges against the enlisted Marines following further investigation and consideration of the legal and policy is-

\*The legal and command background on these charges is covered extensively in LtCol Gary D. Solis, *Marines and Military Law in Vietnam: Trial by Fire* (Washington, D.C.: History and Museums Division, U.S. Marine Corps, 1989), pp. 218-221.

\*\*LtCol Miller's censure stated in part, he "placed personal comfort and welfare above that of . . . fellow prisoners of war." (BGen Walter J. Donovan memo to CMC dtd 29May85 [Vietnam Comment File])

sues involved. Secretary Warner directed that no further action be taken relating to accusations of misconduct while a prisoner. When the Secretary of the Navy announced his decision he concluded that the convening of a pretrial investigation under Article 32 of the Uniform Code of Military Justice was warranted by the evidence, but felt that "further proceedings, with their attendant publicity, would subject many former prisoners of war and their families . . . to additional serious disruption and hardship disproportionate to any national interest which could conceivably be served."<sup>64</sup> In a similar decision, the Secretary of the Army also dismissed the charges against the soldiers involved.

A short time later, the Department of Defense convened a committee to review the Code of Conduct and it considered the handling of the investigations into misconduct. It concluded that "the investigations were minimal, and the rationale supporting dismissal was very weak."<sup>65</sup> While recognizing the "emotional climate" that was disinclined to prosecute any returnees and the Defense Department policy that there would be no prosecution based solely on propaganda statements, the committee was struck by the depth of bitterness expressed by the returnees interviewed. The consensus of returnees was that those who had violated the Uniform Code of Military Justice had not been required to account for their actions: "they were put to no test of justice; and their apparent immunity would serve to undermine command authority in any future [prisoner-of-war] organizations."<sup>66</sup>

The Pacific Command's Homecoming organization continued through 2 October 1973, when the Assistant Secretary of Defense for International Security Affairs believed that there would be no other releases. By 1 December 1973, the last vestiges of Homecoming had faded.<sup>67</sup> Admiral Noel A. M. Gayler's CinCPac command history quoted a *Time* magazine observation that the "exercise was worthy of a major offensive . . . . The U.S. military's planning for the operation had been meticulous and even loving, in an official way."<sup>68</sup>

#### *Code of Conduct*

The wartime experience of the Marine prisoners was examined from debriefs conducted as part of Operation Homecoming Marine. Areas examined included general treatment, interrogation, indoctrination, prisoner organization, prisoner communications, and effectiveness of training received prior to capture. An acronym, "*Sere*," stood for Survival, evasion, resistance, and escape. These four words summarized the ordeal of the Marines at the hands of the Communists in

Southeast Asia.<sup>69</sup> Regardless of background and quality of training, all Marines had been indoctrinated in the Code of Conduct. This code was drafted after the Korean War, when there was a perceived need to delineate acceptable behavior in captivity. The degree of success or failure of this endeavor varied with each individual and his relative circumstances. Conduct in the enemy camp was influenced by two sets of standards, those of international law and those of the American military. While survival was a goal in itself, the quality of that survival was measured against the criteria of resistance to the North Vietnamese. This goal had been set by the Code of Conduct and the service senior ranking officers in the Vietnamese camps.<sup>70</sup>

The Marine Corps had used the Code of Conduct for training and instruction intended to promote in Marines the positive attitude that they could oppose and defeat any enemy of their country, even if they were captured. In recruit training, individual combat training, and during predeployment training, Marines received instruction in the Geneva Convention, the Code of Conduct, and survival, evasion, resistance, and escape techniques. The emphasis on the Code of Conduct and the Geneva Convention before and during the war in Vietnam had been oriented towards "big four only" statements—name, rank, serial number, and date of birth. This left nothing to fall back upon when a Marine was not treated as a prisoner of war by the Communists, but as a "war criminal." The Code of Conduct did provide a sound philosophy, but previous training in it did not allow flexibility. Returning prisoners considered this preparation inadequate for what they experienced. "What does one do when unable to stick to the big four?" was the most discussed question during Homecoming debriefings.<sup>71</sup> As one Marine stated, "I was mentally unprepared for internment. I had guilt feelings of a traitorous nature because of my conduct."<sup>72</sup>

As could be expected, the application of the code varied with individuals and military service. The standards of the Code of Conduct were those that Marines typically carried with them into captivity in Vietnam. The experience they brought out generally reaffirmed the importance of the Code, with minor variation in wording.<sup>73</sup> Captain Montague wrote that it was a "beautiful code," but that the way it was taught aided the enemy. When there is time, as in Vietnam, "all can [be] and were broken by our enemy." It is the subsequent guilt that is exploited, until "we realized we had done our best, and had gone to the extreme" and



Marine Corps Historical Collection

*Much later another Marine came back to a different reception. PFC Robert R. Garwood returned from captivity in North Vietnam and is shown in March 1979 leaving the hospital at Camp Butler, Okinawa, escorted by Maj Ralph S. Bates, in coat and tie at right.*

were then able to pick up the pieces and continue the fight.<sup>74</sup>

#### *MIA's: The Joint Casualty Resolution Center*

The Paris Accords in 1973 called for signatories to report the location of missing persons as well as prisoners. The North Vietnamese for their part claimed an estimated one million missing to be reconciled. More than a statistic, each missing U.S. Marine was a loss to loved ones, a loss to his unit, and an unresolved individual tragedy that did not diminish with the passing of time and the fading of memory. The missing became an issue for the same reasons that the prisoners became hostages during the war. The domestic pressure of families on elected representatives caused the government to mobilize its efforts to resolve the status of these men, which included 290 Marines in two categories at the end of the war: those considered missing and possibly captured (believed to be 136 Marines in 1973) and those considered killed with their bodies not being recovered. After Operation Homecom-

ing did not provide further insight into the status of the remaining missing, Secretary of the Navy Warner directed that "no action be taken to change the status of Vietnam MIA's" without his personal knowledge.<sup>75</sup> This policy continued until procedures were agreed upon that allowed a judicious determination of a "final" status in each case. Since the 1973 cease-fire, the Department of Defense has maintained that the status review process and the accounting for missing are two separate and distinct issues.<sup>76</sup>

When the MACV Special Operations Group-Joint Personnel Recovery Center (JPRC) was deactivated, its prisoner recovery functions were turned over to the Joint Casualty Resolution Center (JCRC).<sup>\*</sup> U.S. Army Brigadier General Robert C. Kingston's Thailand-based organization's mission was to resolve the status of 2,441 Americans missing in action in Southeast Asia.<sup>77</sup> The task force interviewed refugees, conducted searches of identified crash sites, and participated in the "technical" talks with the North Vietnamese. In conjunction with the JCRC, the U.S. Army Central Identification Laboratory provided support with the recovery and identification of remains. The Joint Casualty Resolution Center continued to resolve the status of missing Marines after the completion of Homecoming.

One Marine who did not return during Homecoming was Private First Class Robert R. Garwood. Garwood's initial loss had been treated as a capture by the Communists, even after reports that he had chosen to remain with them after being offered release in 1967. The Marine Corps believed him to be collaborating with the enemy at the time of Operation Homecoming in 1973. Reports by prisoners who had been held with him confirmed these suspicions. Intelligence gathered by DIA (Defense Intelligence Agency) as late as 1975 indicated he operated with Communist forces in Eastern Quang Nam and Quang Ngai provinces. It was reported that Garwood "spoke Vietnamese fluently, had become a Communist Party member and had recently been promoted to the rank of major."<sup>78</sup> After his return to the United States in 1979, it was alleged during his subsequent trial that he acted as an interpreter, interrogator, informer, and indoctrinator of his fellow prisoners. At one point he was said to have served as armed guard and to have struck several prisoners for the death of the camp commander's cat. Other prisoners testified that he also provided help to his fellow Americans and that his be-

<sup>\*</sup>First located in Saigon, the JCRC moved to Thailand in February 1973. In May 1976, JCRC moved to NAS Barbers Point, Hawaii.

havior was the result of manipulation by the Communists.\*<sup>79</sup>

Since the fall of South Vietnam in 1975, and up to 1990 the Defense Intelligence Agency has processed 4,564 reports pertaining to Americans in Southeast Asia: information on grave sites, crash sites, dog tags, live sightings, hearsay, and even prison camp locations.

\*Garwood's trial is covered in detail in LtCol Gary D. Solis' *Marines and Military Law in Vietnam: Trial by Fire* (Washington, D.C., History and Museums Division, U.S. Marine Corps, 1989).

Of 672 Americans identified in these accounts: 78 percent had already returned alive, remains were located for 15 percent, and 7 percent were unaccounted for. As a matter of national policy, should "any report prove true, we will take appropriate action to ensure the return of those involved." Of the "live" sightings of Americans in Southeast Asia by 1986, 97 were "under continuing investigation in an attempt to confirm the information." Over half of these sightings were considered not related to prisoner-of-war situations.<sup>80</sup>

## CHAPTER 16

# Continuity and Change

*Operation End Sweep—Task Force Delta, The Tigers Depart—To What End?*

---

### *Operation End Sweep*

The withdrawal of III MAF units from Vietnam as a result of the Paris Accords was contingent upon the release of allied prisoners held by the Communists and the clearing of American mines from the harbors of North Vietnam. When these waterways were mined in May 1972, the possibility of the U.S. having to clear them had been recognized. These mines were a significant factor in negotiations, as the North Vietnamese possessed only rudimentary mine-clearing capabilities and apparently their Soviet and Chinese allies were not prepared to test theirs.

This was the mission of Seventh Fleet's Mine Countermeasure Force (Task Force 78) under Rear Admiral Brian McCauley, a Naval Academy graduate with a degree in physics from Harvard and a surface warfare career in destroyers. Earlier reductions in size had left the Seventh Fleet with few minesweeping assets. Surface units resided mainly in the reserve, rather than in the active, force structure. As a result, the majority of any minesweeping had to be accomplished by helicopter units and the Navy possessed a single 13-aircraft squadron. Planning for the clearing of mines, codenamed Formation Sentry, began in November 1972 when JCS ordered the Charleston, South Carolina-based Mine Countermeasure Command (MCMC) and Helicopter Mine Countermeasure Squadron (HC) 12 to Cubi Point, Philippines.\*<sup>1</sup>

Task Force 78 was formed at Subic Bay on 24 November around the Mine Countermeasure Command staff, including the Navy medium helicopter squadron HM-12 and the Guam-based Mine Flotilla 1, and augmented by other West Coast units. Marine Corps representatives on the force staff were Lieutenant Colonel James C. Robinson, Lieutenant Colonel Charles B. Redman, and, later, Lieutenant Colonel Victor M. Lee. Admiral McCauley's initial concept envisioned a single airborne mine-countermeasure

\*Formation Sentry I, the original mineclearing plan, was drafted by Cdr Paul L. Gruendl, USN, and other members of the mine countermeasure staff on temporary duty with CinCPac in 1972. It called for fewer assets to cover the same area in sequence over a longer period of time. The later Formation Sentry II planned for simultaneous sweep with more assets involved. (Gruendl Comments)

(AMCM) unit of eight aircraft supported by an LPH and LPD to clear five ports. As planning progressed, the complexity of the task and the desire to complete the clearing as soon as possible made it evident that the command did not possess the necessary forces to accomplish the mission. Admiral McCauley wrote, "Operation End Sweep had the highest priority in the Pacific Fleet. It commenced with the ceasefire and, as a result, people, ships, and aircraft, which in a wartime scenario would have been otherwise occupied, were made available."<sup>2</sup> Major General Leslie E. Brown, the 1st Marine Aircraft Wing (MAW) commander, recalled that the decision was made at the "highest levels to employ USMC helicopters." The JCS and CinCPac staff directed Lieutenant General Louis H. Wilson, Jr., the FMFPac commanding general, to support the Navy with Marine CH-53s, which were basically the same as the HM-12 aircraft. Commander Paul L. Gruendl, Chief of Staff of the Mine Countermeasure Force, recalled the CH-53 had been adopted by the Secretary of the Navy with this mission in mind and that the hard-point fittings for towing equipment were already in place and "the aircraft was not modified."<sup>3</sup> All of this caused concern to Lieutenant General Louis Metzger at III MAF regarding roles, missions, and, more importantly, the loss of 9th MAB amphibious lift and aircraft.<sup>4</sup> General Metzger realized the implications of losing both helicopter squadrons and five amphibious ships because of the mine-clearing commitment, units upon which many demands had been made in the previous six months. Brigadier General Paul G. Graham of 9th MAB removed his Marine units from the appointed ships and changed their organization to provide ship-based support for MACV, without helicopter assets. If required, the amphibious assault ships (LPHs) from Task Force 78 would be made available to 9th MAB for amphibious operations.

Operation End Sweep sent workhorse Marine helicopter squadrons where they least expected to fly, North Vietnam. End Sweep was also a new mission: airborne mine-clearing. To support the task force, FMFPac assigned Major John Van Norrwick III's Hawaii-based Marine Heavy Helicopter Squadron