

SA 99 B-89

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PRISONERS OF WAR (ALL)

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8. Saigon: The Saigon Government today announced it will free 149 convicted prisoners and 411 others would be granted some form of amnesty for TET. UPI-036

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PRISONERS 2/13 NX
WITH VIET 017A

SAIGON (UPI)-- THE SAIGON GOVERNMENT TODAY ANNOUNCED IT WILL FREE 149 CONVICTED PRISONERS IN HONOR OF TET, THE LUNAR NEW YEAR HOLIDAY WHICH BEGINS FEB. 17.

THE GOVERNMENT VIETNAM PRESS AGENCY SAID 411 OTHER PRISONERS WOULD BE GRANTED OTHER FORMS OF AMNESTY FOR TET, INCLUDING THE REDUCTION OF SENTENCES FOR 373 OF THEM.

OFFICIALS STRESSED THAT THE PRISONERS IN QUESTION WERE ALL TRIED UNDER CIVIL CODES AND ARE NOT PRISONERS OF WAR.

HOWEVER, THE GOVERNMENT WAS EXPECTED AT SOME POINT TO ANNOUNCE THE RELEASE OF SOME PRISONERS OF WAR FOR TET.

THE RELEASE OF PRISONERS AT TET IS A TRADITIONAL CUSTOM. MORE THAN 400 DETAINEES WERE SET FREE ON THE OCCASION LAST YEAR.

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DEPARTMENT OF STATE
FOR THE PRESS

FEBRUARY 4, 1969

NO. 22

Secretary Rogers has asked Under Secretary Richardson to assume overall coordination and responsibility for State Department actions concerning prisoners of war in Southeast Asia. This designation of the Under Secretary reaffirms our Government's commitment at the highest levels to continue to do everything possible to assist and protect Americans held by North Viet-Nam and the Viet Cong, to obtain their earliest possible release, and to encourage full compliance with the Geneva Convention of 1949 relative to the treatment of Prisoners of War. The Under Secretary will maintain close liaison on this subject with the White House, the Defense Department and the military services, and with Ambassador Lodge in Paris, who also is taking a close personal interest in our prisoners.

Assisting the Under Secretary on prisoners of war matters as Special Assistant will be Frank A. Sieverts, who previously served as Special Assistant to Ambassador Harriman working particularly on prisoner of war matters. Ambassador Harriman, as you know, had overall responsibility for our prisoners since May of 1966.

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via LDX

Sent to
2/1/1258

THE WHITE HOUSE
WASHINGTON

January 29, 1969

MEMO TO MR. BENJAMIN READ

FROM: Richard M. Moose

Reference: to the Department's proposed response to Prisoner of War telegrams, memorandum to the President, January 27. The attached text should be used in replying to messages to the President from families of US prisoners of war in Vietnam. This substitute text was discussed and approved by Mr. Kissinger and Secretary Rogers in a conversation at the White House today.

Dick

KISSINGER DRAFT RESPONSE

"I fully share your heartfelt concern for your loved ones. 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"

THE SECRETARY OF STATE
WASHINGTON

January 27, 1969

421

MEMORANDUM FOR THE PRESIDENT

Subject: Response to Prisoner of War Telegrams

RECOMMENDATION

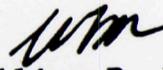
That you reply by personal telegram to messages to you from families of US prisoners of war in Vietnam.

Approve _____ Disapprove _____

DISCUSSION

Over 400 messages addressed to you, nearly all of them telegrams, have been received from families of US prisoners of war in Vietnam urging earliest possible action in Paris for the release of prisoners.

In view of the deep personal interest of the families of the men, I recommend you reply to these telegrams and other messages by personal telegram. A suggested text is enclosed for your approval.



William P. Rogers

Enclosure:

Suggested text.

Suggested text:

9 Appreciate your message Fully share
your concern about release and welfare of our
prisoners. This subject will have high priority
in our talks in Paris.

RICHARD M. NIXON