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Air America calls off search

VIENTIANE, Thurs — Air America yesterday called off search of three Americans missing since their plane disappeared over northwestern Laos last week.

The Americans were identified as George Ritter, Roy Townley and Edward Weisenback. All three had their families in Vientiane.

They are officially listed as missing since a week-long search turned up no clue of their fate.

They were flying a C123 transport plane on a supply mission to pro-government guerrillas operating near the Thai border and failed to arrive at their destination.

Initial reports suggested their plane might have been shot down by Chinese Communist anti-aircraft fire. The Chinese are building a road across northern Laos through Pathet Lao-controlled territory.

The road is off-limits to American and Laotian aircraft because of heavy anti-aircraft defence.

Air America sources yesterday said they considered it unlikely the missing plane has flown close enough to the road to be shot down. —AP

(Turn over for additional space)

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