

Sanitized - Approved For Release : CIA-RDP

# Freed Americans Sang To Amuse Red Captors

By John Randolph  
Los Angeles Times

LONGBINH, Vietnam, Jan.

Two American civilian workers kidnaped by the Vietcong and held for seven months told today of being ordered to whistle, sing, and "be happy" in a jungle prison camp where another prisoner, a young Filipino aviation mechanic, was dying of beriberi.

After the sick man died Dec. 30, the two Americans and the Filipino's weak and distraught widow were given a certificate against recapture for 15 days, marched through the jungle under guard, and turned loose in a village. They were taken by a friendly villager to a Vietnamese Army outpost Wednesday morning.

"They told us we would have to 'repent' or they would keep us five years," explained Thomas R. Scales, 44, of Matamoras, Pa.

"They told us to show good will . . . They asked us to 'be happy' and they made us sing and whistle all day. We sang 'Jingle Bells' and 'Abie's Irish Rose'."

Scales and a fellow-worker Robert W. Monahan, 41, of Bellport, N.Y., were captured last May 28 at the seaside town of Vungtau, 50 miles down river from Saigon.

Both men were construction experts with Pacific Architects and Engineers, Inc., which has a number of U.S. contracts in Vietnam. The dead Filipino Vincent Gaza, was an employee of Air America. He and his wife were captured in June. Mrs. Gaza, 31, is being treated for shock at a hospital near Kuanloc, 40 miles from Saigon.

She said today "I am lucky to be alive."

Scales and Monahan, wearing blue pajamas and looking worn and thin, related their adventure in an interview in the U.S. Army Hospital at Longbinh, just east of Saigon. Scales had lost 55 pounds, Monahan 75.

[A U.S. Embassy spokesman in Saigon said the two men had given "invaluable military information and a tremendous amount of intelligence" to U.S. debriefing officers, the Associated Press reported. Newsmen were asked not to question the men about the camp's location.]

Scales said the Vietcong refused to accept their argument that they were civilians, and therefore should not be held prisoners.

"They told us there were no civilians . . . that every American and Allied civilian was technically a soldier," he said.

The two men said that aside from the poor living conditions they were not positively mistreated or physically abused. No effort was made to lecture them or attempt political "brainwashing." They were not forced to sign any confessions or other documents, except a final release paper in the nature of a receipt.

In the first 14 days of captivity they were moved through several camps before reaching their final destination deep in the jungle. Once their group of eight, including six guards, were spotted by American aircraft and they were attacked and strafed, surviving a near miss from a rocket.

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