

NIXON Acknowledges American Jailed in China's C.I.A. Agent

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When John T. Downey was a Yale senior in 1951, a classmate later recalled, a Central Intelligence Agency recruiter visited the campus.

"Purely as a hypothetical" possibility, the visitor mentioned that the C.I.A. might want to organize resistance in mainland China.

Mr. Downey went on to become a C.I.A. agent, as President Nixon noted today, apparently the first public confirmation of the fact.

Mr. Downey became a prisoner of the Chinese Communists after his military aircraft was forced down in Chinese territory in 1952, during the Korean war. And the classmate, Prof. Jerome Alan Cohen of the Harvard Law School, later said Mr. Downey had undertaken the "Hypothetical" mission.

A native of New Britain, Conn., Mr. Downey was mentioned by a questioner at today's Presidential news conference after Mr. Nixon had briefly discussed the cases of two American fliers being held by China.

Sentence Cut to 5 Years

Mr. Downey's name was brought up by a newsman and the President disclosed that the prisoner was a C.I.A. agent. The President noted that Mr. Downey's sentences of 30 years had been commuted to five years, an action that the Chinese announcement in 1971. Mr. Nixon said he had "no assurance" that Mr. Downey would be freed before finishing his sentence but that the United States had made known its hope that such action would be taken. [Question 15, Page 20].

On another question of the two American flyers being held prisoner in China, Mr. Nixon said that "we have every reason to believe that these flyers being held prisoner in China, Mr. Nixon said that "we have every reason to believe that these flyers will be released on the initiative of the People's Republic of China as the P.O.W. situation is worked out in Vietnam." [Question 14].

The President did not mention the fliers by name, but he was understood to be referring to Capt. Philip E. Smith of the Air Force, and Lieut. Comdr. Robert J. Flynn of the Navy.

Richard G. Fecteau, who was aboard Mr. Downey's aircraft when it was forced down, was



Associated Press

John T. Downey

971, together with Mary Ann Harbert, who was seized in Chinese waters in April, 1968, while on a pleasure cruise.

Both Mr. Fecteau and Mr. Downey were officially identified at the time they were fired down as civilian employees of the United States Army.

When he was freed, Mr. Fecteau said that during his 19 years of imprisonment in China "I was in solitary for so much time I'm not used to conversation." He said, "you get used to" solitary confinement, then added, "That's my problem."

Mr. Fecteau said he had been in a prison camp in or near Peking and that the only other prisoners in his cell block were other Americans. He said they included the two officers and Mr. Downey.

Captain Smith was shot down during a reconnaissance mission in 1965. Lieutenant Flynn was downed during a mission over North Vietnam in 1967.

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