

The Son Tay Raider Reunion

By Dick Alexander

The Air Force general who ordered the abortive commando raid on the Son Tay prison camp in 1970 said yesterday he would do it again given the same set of circumstances.

Major Gen. Leroy J. Manor, replying to suggestions that the pre-raid intelligence could have been unsatisfactory, said:

"We were confident they (American POWs) would be there."

Manor, now vice commander of the 13th Air Force at Clark Air Base, the Philippines, was overall commander of the search and rescue mission of volunteer Army and Air Force men that dropped into the North Vietnamese prison camp in November, 1970, only to find American POWs gone.

The mission itself was led by Army Col. Arthur "Bull" Simons.

Earlier Departure

Earlier last week, Navy Cmdr. Render Crayton, senior POW at Son Tay, said

Commando Chief Says, 'We'd Do It Again'



GENERAL MANOR
Would do it again

the last man left the camp on July 15, some four months before the rescue-minded task force arrived.

The general was here along with Crayton and other principals for the Simons Son Tay-POW-raider get-together over the week-

end. The group spent a quiet day yesterday with brunch, a bull session, a Bay tour and a visit to night spots.

Manor said the raiders were equipped with photographs.

He declined to say whether the aerial reconnaissance was high altitude or low level photography, but pointed out the flights over the Son Tay compound were "fairly frequent" and some occurred very shortly before the Nov. 20 rescue attempt.

A study of the photographs showed "indications of activity" in the camp, some 30 miles northwest of Hanoi, he added, and "we were confident they (prisoners) would still be there."

No Losses

The 49 year old general said the intelligence on enemy defenses was "very good" and "enabled us to get in and out and not suffer any loss."

Manor said the primary raiding party was made up of all volunteers — Green Berets and Air Force men — and actual training for the mission started in late August, 1970.

He declined to name the location where he worked from in the mission planning, but said he was operating out of a command post where he "had communication with every element of the force."

Local POW Wives Wire Support for Rescue Try

Fort Walton Beach Area POW wives are backing up the recent military attempt to free prisoners of war (POWs) from Southeast Asian detention camps near Hanoi.

The wives have sent telegrams to eight high-ranking U.S. Government officials including Washington's severest critic of the present administration's Viet War policies, U.S. Sen. J.W. Fulbright of Arkansas.

Fulbright called Secretary of Defense Melvin Laird before the Senate Committee on Foreign Relations following last Friday's action in North Vietnam when U.S. Army and Air Force personnel made a futile attempt to release POWs in the camp, held by Communists.

The wives are backed in their actions, according to Col. Dave Anderson of Fort Walton Beach, by the POW-MIA Families, Inc., an organization of families with men held prisoner or missing-in-action (MIA). Anderson is one of the organization coordinators.

The wire to Fulbright pointed to a variance in the senator's previous stance on the POW issue and his recent statements, according to Anderson.

The wives' wire to the Arkansas

senator said, "we believe that all Americans should stand behind any action taken by our government in securing the release of these long-suffering prisoners. Your stand does not reflect the American opinion shown through concern of people across the nation."

A duplicate wire went also to Sen. George McGovern of South Dakota, whose Indochina War stance has been similar to that of Fulbright's.

A smarting retort went also to Sen. Ted Kennedy of Massachusetts which said, "your statements regarding the POW rescue attempt will certainly provide comfort to the leaders in North Vietnam, as have your previous remarks on this subject.

"Appeasement is fruitless and negotiations with Communists have never proved successful. The families of these 1,600 men find your stand deplorable."

Wires of heartfelt thanks went to President Richard Nixon who Wednesday decorated four men involved in the unsuccessful POW rescue attempt.

Wires of gratitude went also to Secretary Laird and to Senators Barry S. Goldwater, Ariz.; Robert J. Dole, Kansas; Hugh Scott, Pa. and John G. Tower, Tex;

U.S. Regains 'Guts'

Most Reactions Favorable To Attempted Rescue Raid

CHATTANOOGA, Tenn. (AP) — A woman whose husband has been missing in action in Vietnam for three years says the daring raid last Friday on a prisoner of war camp in North Vietnam shows the U.S. government "has guts again."

But Spec. 4 Coy R. Tinsley, held captive in North Vietnam for eight months before returning home to a Thanksgiving turkey a year ago, said Thursday he feared the raids could lead to death for the American prisoners.

Interviewed in Anniston, Ala., Tinsley was asked what he believes would have been the probable result if he had been a prisoner at the time of the raid into North Vietnam which failed.

"It could have gotten me killed," he said. "They shouldn't be raiding those places."

Mrs. Wayne Fullam, whose husband, an Air Force Major, may be a

prisoner of war, said the U.S. raids "thrilled me because I thought here, at last, the United States government has guts again."

She does not know if he is alive, but has said before she has reason to believe he is being held prisoner.

In Los Angeles, the son of the chief of U.S. forces in the Pacific squatted inside a bamboo jail cell in Pershing Square on Thursday to eat the same type of Thanksgiving meal he says his brother had as a war prisoner in North Vietnam.

Joe McCain, 28-year-old son of Adm. John S. McCain Jr., dug chopsticks into a rice bowl filled with pig fat, pumpkin mash and water rice. About 100 other relatives of POWs, including wives and children, gathered around the homemade cell with rice bowls in hand.

McCain, a former Navy enlisted man who served on the aircraft carrier

Enterprise off the Vietnam coast, said the demonstration was intended to call public attention to the plight of war prisoners.

The San Diego-based group, Concern For Prisoners of War Inc., has gathered letters from 10 million Americans to present to Hanoi's negotiators soon at Paris, McCain said.

"We may be divided on civil rights and the war and many other things, but we're all united on POWs," declared McCain, whose brother John has been a war prisoner for three years.

McCain and two other civilians with POW relatives were dressed in homemade maroon and grey pajamas like those worn by prisoners. He told an interviewer he had this message for his brother:

"My message would be, 'keep the faith, John, we're going to get you out. We'll not rest until we get you out. After years of silence we're going to the American people and not quit until every man is home.'"

U.S. Claims 'Net Plus' for Raid Despite Failure of Mission

DIPLOMACY, From A1

Laird's public warning, on Nov. 13, that the United States will "take appropriate action in response to attacks on our unarmed aircraft" registered much more sharply in North Vietnam than it did in the United States.

North Vietnam immediately treated Laird's remark as public groundwork for an attack. Hanoi's leaders issued public instructions to all forces for greater "vigilance and combat readiness," to meet "new adventurous acts against the North..."

When the blows came, however, they penetrated deeper into North Vietnam than any have since the United States halted its sustained bombing of the North on Nov. 1, 1968. U.S. officials are now convinced that the commando raid at Sontay, just 23 miles from the capital city of Hanoi, caused great embarrassment and chagrin for North Vietnam's air defense strategists.

This is expected to result in tightened security control of U.S. prisoners, plus greater air defense.

The attempted prisoner-release has received considerable sympathy abroad, where Hanoi's past-attempts to handle captured U.S. pilots as "war criminals" backfired on North Vietnam.

But a number of foreign observers, while praising the gallantry of the attempt, questioned its judgment. The Times of London, called the raid "a reminder of the worst failing peace—the fail-

ure to keep military and political policy in step..."

"It would be gratifying," said The Times, "if the shock of the raid were to extract some future concessions from the North Vietnamese over prisoners. Much more probable is a hardening all around at the Paris peace talks and stronger suspicions in Hanoi over what American policy really is in winding down the war."

U.S. officials have noted, with great interest, that Hanoi's commentary on the prisoner camp raid, in a Foreign Ministry statement Friday, was, as they interpreted it, "defensive" on the prisoner issue.

Absent from the latest statement were any characterizations of the captured U.S. pilots as "war criminals," "bandits," "pirates" or "aggressors." Instead, Hanoi said: "The government of the Democratic Republic of Vietnam has unswervingly carried out a humanitarian policy vis-a-vis the captured U.S. pilots. It has taken measures to ensure their safety. The U.S. threat to strike and take away pilots in detention camps shows how adventurous and hysteric the U.S. authorities are!... The U.S. aggressors must bear full responsibility for their reckless acts."

What the Hanoi statement focused on was not the prisoners, but the bombing of North Vietnam and U.S. attempts "to justify the widening of the zone of attacks" by adding, as the U.S. has

done, a new element: air strikes to protect American pilots on missions "to interdict North Vietnamese supplies" moving through Laos.

This shows, Hanoi maintained, that the United States is bent on new "adventurous acts" against North Vietnam, citing Laird's warnings last week that new action may be taken to free American pilots.

Yesterday, both major North Vietnamese daily newspapers, Nhan Dan and Quan Doi Nhan Dan, called for intensification of the nation's defenses "to make a strong bunker of every village, enterprise, farm, work-site, and street, and to turn our villages and mountains into deadly traps to annihilate the U.S. aggressors wherever they show up..."

This is further indication, U.S. experts concede, that a "siege mentality," which the latest raids have intensified, is spreading in North Vietnam. Hanoi's attitude, in turn, leaves wide open the question of whether, in the long run, the U.S. attacks will prove to be a "net plus" or a "net minus" for ending the war.



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Laird Doesn't Rule Out Use Of Military to Free Prisoners

WASHINGTON (AP) — Secretary of Defense Melvin R. Laird said Tuesday the United States "will make further efforts to free our prisoners" in North Vietnam, and this includes possible military action.

"I would not rule out any action," Laird said. "We are going to make every kind of effort to free our prisoners of war."

The Pentagon chief made this statement when reporters asked if there might be another commando-type raid like the dramatic but fruitless descent on Son Tay ten days ago.

The Nixon administration is concerned about the POW issue, Laird said, and he intends to take it up at a meeting of North Atlantic Treaty Organization defense ministers in Brussels.

Laird talked to newsmen at Andrews Air Force Base before taking off for the three-day NATO meeting.

His words were echoed in Paris by Ambassador David K. E. Bruce, chief U.S. envoy to the Vietnam peace talks there. Bruce told a news conference the United States will continue to seek the early release of American prisoners in Vietnam "by all means available to us."

"Hanoi and the Viet Cong must understand, in unmistakable terms," Bruce said, "that their past and existing attitude on the prisoner of war question is intolerable. We will continue to pursue the twin objectives of humane treatment and early release of our men by all means available to

us."

Bruce said the Communists' reaction to President Nixon's Oct. 7 proposal for immediate and unconditional release of all POWs on both sides "has been totally negative."

"They show no concern for their own men and flout our concern for

ours," he said.

North Vietnam's Premier Pham Van Dong, in an interview published in the French newspaper Le Monde, said the prisoner issue could be resolved only after Washington decides to withdraw all of its troops from South Vietnam.

Laird Warns Viets Against Retaliation

WASHINGTON (AP) — Secretary of Defense Melvin R. Laird said Tuesday night the United States has shown North Vietnam "we do have the capability" to rescue the Americans they hold prisoner—and warned of strong counter-measures should the Communists retaliate against their captives for the U.S. raid on a POW compound.

Laird said that raid, which rescued no one, was a signal to Hanoi "that we care about these men, and that we will take rather unusual means to see that these men are returned as free Americans."

The defense secretary told the Senate Foreign Relations Committee that he would recommend immediate retaliation against any future Communist attacks on U.S. reconnaissance aircraft, and a full-scale bombing resumption if a major force should invade South Vietnam across the demilitarized zone.

"If a major force comes across the DMZ, I would be strong in my recommendation, I may not be supported, but I would recommend that we com-

mence bombing," Laird said in nationally televised testimony.

He said he recommended Friday's raid on a North Vietnamese prisoner of war compound because "our men were dying in captivity," and because American prisoners felt they had been forgotten.

The Pentagon said it has received within the past two weeks the names of 17 Americans reported to have died in North Vietnamese prison camps.

"Many of our prisoners of war were losing their hope and their faith," he said.

Laird left open the possibility of future rescue attempts.

"We have shown not only North Vietnam, but we have shown the prisoners of war that we do care, that we do have the capability to go forward with their rescue," Laird said.

Sen. J. W. Fulbright, D-Ark., the committee chairman, asked whether Laird knew of other ways of freeing the prisoners.

"We are considering other actions,"

Laird replied. He did not elaborate.

Laird also disclosed that the U.S. rescue mission had hoped to free up to 70 prisoners at Son Tay.

"I have no regrets about its being recommended," Laird said. "My only regret is that we did not bring out any prisoners of war, but that was a chance we had to take."

He said the United States will not tolerate mistreatment of the prisoners in retaliation for the raid.

"This matter would be weighed very carefully by our side and if the enemy took this kind of action, I would certainly feel that it was my duty as secretary of defense to recommend strong countermeasures by the United States," Laird said.

Laird said U.S. bombing raids against North Vietnamese antiaircraft and missile sites Saturday signaled Hanoi that "we would not tolerate setting aside the understandings" under which regular American bombing was halted on Nov. 1, 1968.

POW Rescue Mission Pilot Relates Story to Area Wives

By DOLLIE GULL

A pilot who flew a helicopter into the Son Tay prisoner of war (POW) compound outside Hanoi last week in a futile attempt to free Americans held by North Vietnamese talked Saturday with POW wives from the Fort Walton Beach Area.

In an informal meeting in the Shalimar home of Col. (Ret.) Dave Anderson, coordinator of POW-MIA Families Inc., Maj. Herbert Kalen of the U.S. Air Force Rescue and Recovery Training Center, Eglin AFB, told wives of prisoners and men-missing-in-action (MIA), what happened during the recent "hazardous" mission to free POWs north of the 19th Parallel.

The surprise element was the factor which most nearly made the rescue attempt a success, said Kalen, "had there been prisoners in the compound to rescue. It was a complete and total surprise," Kalen emphasized.

The major, who served a year in Vietnam in 1967 as part of a search and recovery outfit for downed pilots, told the eagerly listening wives, the danger involved in the raid. "The fire-works" he said, telling them of opposition encountered during the mission, "was like the fourth of July." The mission was carried out during a simultaneous air attack on Hanoi proper.

The timing on the rescue attempt was "tight". "We're talking about a short period of time - like five minutes," added the major as he discussed hitting the compound during the air raid over the city, 23 miles to the west.

Kalen said that SAMS, surface-to-air missiles, were in hard pursuit of other American aircraft, but not the rescue party "who were sitting on the ground."

The most penetrating questions put to Kalen by the women centered about compound living conditions as found by the would-be rescuers.

Kalen, who said he had not gone into any cellblocks, remarked that the compound buildings consisted of old, mor-

tar-type structures. Another feature of the compound was that it was enclosed by "a couple of walls." There was only one latrine within the compound, Kalen said and added the cellblocks contained cots "and debris."

A photograph clipped from a newspaper worked its way around the room as he talked. The picture showed an air view of the compound and received close scrutiny by the wives and the other POW-MIA family members present.

Kalen said no official photographers were on the mission, but that there were several cameras among men in the rescue party. The picture showed the compound as it was, he pointed out.

The wives were quite interested in Kalen's knowledge concerning the length of time that had lapsed since prisoners were last in the compound, which was found empty of Americans during the raid.

Kalen stated it was difficult to guess how long it had been since prisoners were held in the compound, but several other guesses placed it at two to three weeks.

One of the women asked pointedly if there could have been an information leak prior to the mission.

Kalen answered that it was true that the biggest worry "to anyone" was security.

"Had they known we were coming at all, they could have thrown rocks at us," he said, pointing to vulnerability of rescue craft and personnel. Kalen stated he thought that there was no leak because North Vietnamese in the compound were "caught completely by surprise."

Kalen, whose Eglin duties resulted in his being closely involved in the training of the volunteer rescuers, said execution of the mission went off exactly as "planned."

This smoothness he attributed to long hours of practice in a training compound at Eglin AFB which was "identical" to the Son Tay POW camp.

The men who took part in the mission were all volunteers. Kalen, among those volunteers, said he would be glad to train others for any future such rescue attempts, but laughingly said, "that's the last time I'm going to volunteer."

"Virtually the whole Air Force was tapped" for volunteers, said Kalen, "but no one knew the exact nature of the mission."

It was "a little difficult to seek out volunteers for such a mission without divulging any information," he said, but that's the way it was done.

Being a professional search and rescue man himself, Kalen said he was approached by officials from the point of view of being offered a new concept in search and rescue tactics.

The wives' reaction to Kalen's report seemed to be a grateful appreciation for this first sign of a tangible, physical effort by the U.S. Government to obtain the release of Asian held American POWs.

POWs Must Feel U.S. Cares

I have been a prisoner of the enemy in war. Six months solitary confinement in a Japanese prison in World War II.

Perhaps, then, I can suggest in some small way how the American prisoners of war now in North Vietnam feel after the attempt at their rescue.

Thinking back 28 years to my own feelings, I remember two things quite vividly:

The Doolittle raid of April, 1942, and the visit of the Swiss government representative, after I'd spent about five and a half months in solitary. During the war the neutral Swiss represented U.S. interests in Tokyo.

I remember strongly even today because these incidents brought hope to the heart of a prisoner who, through no one's fault, had had no sign from his government and his country during the months of imprisonment.

It did not matter that the Doolittle raiders had not come to free us prisoners but were over Tokyo for an en-

tirely different purpose. You could look out the barred window and see American fliers were there. For hours afterward you could relive this flight by watching the rising smoke and by listening to the excited conversations of the guards. You could feel and hear and know yourself that something was being done—and in a way you could feel that it was being done for you. You were part of it.

When the Swiss came, I cried. I cried because I said to myself, "My country cares!" I said it over again and over again in happy agonizing gulps. In the months of holding in during daily questioning by teams of guards and of sitting, eating, sleeping in my cell, I had not realized how alone I had come to feel myself.

The freedom in my soul and in my voice was not the thought of rescue or release (pleasant as that would be) that mattered so much as the thought that my country cared enough for me—for us, that the Swiss should come to see each of us individually even for a few minutes and should be attempting, whether successfully or not, to do

something for us.

I still remember the room in which my Swiss visitor and I sat. I remember the expression on his face and the way his lips moved when he talked.

He asked me a few questions and we talked a little, the normal things men say to each other. He did not promise anything. It was then not yet clear whether negotiations for an exchange of prisoners would be successful. But I walked back down that prison hall with my heart singing as loudly, as strongly, as powerfully and as triumphantly as a gigantic choir in a cathedral—as if heaven had opened wide.

I was a man and an American and nothing could defeat my soul.

I never saw my Swiss friend again. But he will remain my friend until the day I die.

It is hope that men require when they are prisoners of war. And a belief that their country cares. And their wives and children.

With these a man can endure all things. Sickness, loneliness, beatings, death.

Visualization of POW Camp Helps Wives to Understand

By DOLLIE GULL

Seeing the Son Tay prisoner of war (POW) camp model helped alleviate some fears for two Fort Walton Beach war wives when they were given the opportunity with newsmen to view the replica at Wednesday's press conference given by Brig. Gen. LeRoy J. Manor at Eglin AFB.

Manor, commander of the U.S. Air Force Special Forces, explained details of the POW rescue attempt made near Hanoi, North Vietnam, Nov. 20.

"Just seeing something you can look at and visualize how prisoners might live helps," said Mrs. Martha Roby, whose husband is missing in action in Southeast Asia.

Gen. Manor invited Mrs. Roby and Mrs. Jeanne Reilly to sit in on the conference as representa-

tives for the area's POW-MIA (missing-in-action) wives.

"It was very interesting," Mrs. Roby went on to say. "Quite often some details covered by newspapers are more interesting to us than to the average person. And too, some details which seem unimportant to anyone else are very vital to us. Details brought out at conferences like these are often not entirely passed on in news stories, so we enjoyed sitting in on this one.

"It's fantastic, the risks those men took going into the POW camp in the attempt to free prisoners. It gave me cold chills when I heard about the raid," Mrs. Roby said. "They could have ended up prisoners there themselves or even in some worse place," she added.

Uncertain that her husband survived the crash of his Ameri-

can plane as a result of the Southeast Asian War, Mrs. Roby added, "I would be happy to hear that he is in a compound like that somewhere."

Mrs. Reilly also expressed similar feelings. Proud of the men who took the risk of entering the camp to free prisoners she said, "I think they were heroic." She added that she also thought it nice to be included in the press conference. "Each time we hear the story of the rescue attempt, something a little different comes out.

"When I saw the compound model, I can't say that I had any personal feelings other than the belief that it was marvelous that those brave men took the chances they did," she said.

Mrs. Reilly's husband, LaVerne, has been missing-in-action in Laos some four and a half years.

Rescue Try Described By Commanding Officer

A press conference at Eglin AFB Wednesday attracted news coverage from networks, wire services and local news media as Brig. Gen. LeRoy J. Manor explained the Son Tay prisoner of war (POW) rescue attempt from his standpoint as commander of the attempted rescue.

The North Vietnamese may have moved up to 100 American prisoners of war out of the Son Tay Camp as much as three months before the Nov. 20 rescue mission said Manor.

Manor, Air Force special operations force commander who also commanded the joint Air Force-Army Green Berets who invaded Son Tay, revealed several additional details about the mission but said he was prevented by security from revealing others.

As the general discussed various phases of the rescue attempt, he pointed to a miniature replica of the POW camp, used as an aid in training rescuers at Eglin.

Watching intently along with newsmen were two Fort Walton Beach Area wives whose husbands are missing-in-action in Southeast Asia, Mrs. Martha Roby and Mrs. Jeanne Reilly.

The general said at the news conference that it might have been as much as three months before the raid that the prisoners were removed. If so, that would mean the prisoners might have been moved about the time the raiding party went into training in mid-August, he said.

Asked why the prisoners had been moved, Manor replied: "I have heard no speculation on that yet. We do know that from time-to-time prisoners of war are moved."

In announcing the raid, government officials indicated that a prime motivation for the mission was reports that American prisoners of war were dying in prison camps.

Manor said that many raiders who were on the ground reported back to him that there was no evidence POW's had died at Son Tay. He said little evidence was found inside the 180 by 132 foot compound to prove that American POW's had been held there.

"The only evidence we found that it was in fact a prisoner of war facility was the type of construction of the cells," he said.

Asked to describe a typical cell,

Manor said "it's a room that is extremely plain, very bare walls, roughly 6 by 8 feet in dimensions."

He said that prisoners were housed in one long building and two smaller buildings inside the compound located 23 miles west of Hanoi.

"They had a capacity for approximately 100 prisoners of war in this camp," he said.

Manor said that the raiding party—he would not reveal the number of personnel—was able to get inside the compound before North Vietnamese defenders opened fire.

"We were able to get in there completely undetected," he said. "The intelligence we had on the enemy's defenses was accurate."

The general was asked why intelligence on the defenses and dimensions of the camp could be so accurate but the movement of prisoners outside Son Tay had not been detected.

"The aerial photographs showed us that there was activity inside the compound," Manor said.

"This would lead one to believe that it was a prisoner of war compound." However, Manor indicated that some of the activity may have been related to a garden that the North Vietnamese troops had inside the compound. This was found when a single rescue helicopter landed in a small cleared space inside the walls.

The general said the danger that North Vietnamese would retaliate against prisoners of war was carefully weighed and officers responsible for the mission had concluded that possibility was remote.

"We don't believe there are going to be any repercussions against the prisoners of war," he said. "I do expect that their security will perhaps be tightened around the compounds."

Manor said if the decision were up to him, he would order additional raids on American prisoner of war camps inside North Vietnam.

"Speaking only from a personal point of view, yes, I definitely would recommend more," the general said.

Eglin Disclosed as Site Of POW Raid Training

EGLIN AIR FORCE BASE, Fla. (AP) — The mission was code named Ivory Coast and the Green Berets and Air Force commandos involved were training deep in the woods of this mammoth Air Force Base.

Most of the training was at night and the assault team, said to number fewer than 100 men, practiced on a site marked out as an exact copy of their objective: the Son Tay prisoner of war camp in North Vietnam.

Few details of the mission conducted Nov. 20 have been disclosed so far. Brig. Gen. LeRoy Manor, commander of the Special Forces Operation force, has scheduled a Tuesday news conference.

But it is known that the assault team trained with a scale model of the POW camp nicknamed "Barbara" and that actual dimensions of the buildings in the POW camp were marked out on the ground at the Eglin training site.

Eglin was a logical training site. The Army operates a Ranger school deep in the pine woods of this 740-square-mile base—about the size of Rhode Island,—centered seven miles north of Fort Walton Beach.

The major rehearsal site was located in a wooded area of the ba

accessible only by air. The Air Force would not take newsmen to the site.

"The majority of the training took place at night because the raid took place at night," said Capt. Alan Batten, Special Operations Force public information officer. "It involved several types of aircraft."

Volunteers arrived Aug. 10, trained

for several weeks, and left for South Vietnam shortly before the mission which failed when the prisoners were moved out in advance. A full-size mockup of the Son Tay camp was reportedly constructed in South Vietnam for final dress rehearsals.

The commandos spent hours studying Barbara, the 6 by 6 foot model of the POW camp that accompanied the

task force to South Vietnam.

"It was never alone," said Col. Roland K. McCoskrie, Special Operations Force vice commander.

"We always had a member of the team sleep with it."

The model is now kept in a conference room at Special Operations Force headquarters.

Leader Tells of POW Camp Raid

By Jim Sample

EGLIN AFB, Fla. — Americans who raided Song Tay weren't surprised by any of the defenses of the North Vietnamese, only the absence of prisoners, according to the mission's commander, AF Brig. Gen. Leroy J. Manor.

"We received only light automatic weapons fire during the raid on the camp, which didn't surprise us," Manor told a press conference here, last week.

Manor, who heads the multi-purposed AF Special Operations Force here, voiced his personal support for possible future raids to free American POWs in North Vietnam, even if they involved larger units than the raiding party used at Song Tay.

Although military spokesmen have declined to comment on the number



General Manor

of Air Force and Army men in the operation, unofficial sources have estimated between 40 and 60 took part in the Song Tay landing.

Manor said the party received heavy fire as they landed, and were still receiving some light weapons fire when they departed the POW camp, some 20 miles west of Hanoi, after their futile, cell-by-cell search.

"We looked in every cell inside the walled compound, and also searched many of the buildings just outside the walls of the prison," he said, but the raiders found no evidence of American prisoners having been there in weeks, possibly months.

Using the scale model of the compound nicknamed "Barbara," which the raiders had used for training, Manor indicated that the North Vietnamese command post and guard buildings outside the walls had also been searched by the raiding party, but to no avail.

When asked about the danger to lives of the prisoners which such raids might pose, Manor recognized that there was a definite risk and this increased emphasis on total surprise.

"This was one of the main reasons we had to land a helicopter, the small HH-3, right inside the compound, even though we had to abandon it," Manor said.

The force was lifted out by the larger HH-53s, one of the AF's main rescue craft.

Manor indicated that immediate danger to the prisoners had been of prime concern in planning the attack, so that surprising the guards and getting to the prisoners immediately, before the guards could act, was what they had hoped for.

Pointing to the detailed scale model, Manor described the walled compound as being slightly smaller than a football field with enough cells to hold 100 POWs.

The general said that very

"timely" aerial photographs of the camp had shown activity within the compound shortly before the raid, and the planners could only assume that this meant prisoners were there.

But apparently the activity involved only the North Vietnamese guards, Manor said.

Manor said the men in the operation were all volunteers who had been recruited at Ft. Bragg, N.C., headquarters of the Army Special Forces, and among Air Force members of the Special Operations Force here.