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IMPRISONMENT AND ESCAPE OF LT. (JG.) DIETER DENGLER, USNR

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HEARING BEFORE THE COMMITTEE ON ARMED SERVICES UNITED STATES SENATE EIGHTY-NINTH CONGRESS SECOND SESSION

TESTIMONY OF LT. (JG.) DIETER DENGLER, USNR, ON
HIS ESCAPE FROM IMPRISONMENT AFTER HIS AIRCRAFT
WAS SHOT DOWN OVER NORTH VIETNAM

SEPTEMBER 16, 1966

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IMPRISONMENT AND ESCAPE OF LT. (JG.) DIETER DENGLER, U.S. NAVAL RESERVE

FRIDAY, SEPTEMBER 16, 1966

U.S. SENATE,
COMMITTEE ON ARMED SERVICES,
Washington, D.C.

The committee met, pursuant to notice, at 10:30 a.m., in room 318, Old Senate Office Building, Senator Richard B. Russell (chairman) presiding.

Present: Senators Russell of Georgia, Symington, Ervin, Cannon, Young of Ohio, Byrd of Virginia, Saltonstall, Smith, and Thurmond.

Also present: William H. Darden, chief of staff; Charles B. Kirbow, chief clerk; Herbert S. Atkinson, assistant chief clerk; T. Edward Braswell and Gordon A. Nease, professional staff members.

Chairman RUSSELL. The committee will come to order.

The Chair believes that all of us who love this country and who are proud of the competence and dedication of those serving in our Armed Forces have been impressed and thrilled by the accounts of the extraordinary experiences of Navy Lt. (jg.) Dieter Dengler during his imprisonment after his aircraft was shot down while attacking a target in North Vietnam.

Mr. Dengler was conspicuously courageous in not yielding to torture designed to obtain his signature on untrue statements calculated to reflect unfavorably on the United States. The things that he witnessed and that he endured while a prisoner, and in escaping his cruel captors, and finding a way back to a point of rescue, are ghastly and gruesome.

While it is difficult to portray vividly the difficulties he overcame, it is not hard to express our admiration of his dauntless conduct, and I, for one, am proud to see that it was again demonstrated that the spirit of a courageous man is unquenchable.

The Chair requested Mr. Dengler's appearance here this morning only after being assured that his doctors gave their approval, and in looking at him, as a layman, you can understand why they did.

In inviting him here I had two motivations: One, the Chair thought that Mr. Dengler's conduct was deserving of the widest possible publicity and the warmest admiration; and, two, the Chair believes that by hearing firsthand of his experiences we may gain valuable information about the nature of the forces with which we are engaged in southeast Asia, the support they receive and their motivations; I say, parenthetically, that Mr. Dengler is an American by choice instead of by birth.

The Department of Defense has made available a comprehensive narrative of the capture, escape, and evasion of Mr. Dengler, together with a transcript of his press conference in California. These docu-

ments should be helpful to the committee, and without objection a copy of each will be placed in the record at this point.

(The documents referred to follow:)

PRESS CONFERENCE, U.S. NAVAL AIR STATION, NORTH ISLAND, SAN DIEGO, CALIF., 13 SEPTEMBER 1966, re LIEUTENANT (JUNIOR GRADE) DIETER DENGLER, U.S. NAVAL RESERVE

The press conference opened at 1008 hours.

CAPTAIN HILL. Ladies and Gentlemen, Captain Duncan, Chief of Staff, Commander Naval Air Forces, U.S. Pacific Fleet.

CAPTAIN DUNCAN. Good morning. On behalf of Vice Admiral Thomas F. Conley, Commander, Naval Air Forces, Pacific Fleet, who is in the Western Pacific, it is my great privilege today to welcome you gentlemen of the press. A dauntless naval aviator, Lieutenant (junior grade) Dieter Dengler, I would like to introduce to you at this time.

We are pleased, also, to have here with us his mother, Mrs. Maria Dengler, and his brother, Klaus Dengler.

All of you, I know, are aware that Lieutenant Dengler was captured by the Communists last February, and made his escape on the 20th of July, and after 22 days of escape and evasion, which was an epic event, finally made his way to safety.

Lieutenant Dengler is completing medical treatment at the Naval Hospital in San Diego. He is prepared to respond to your questions as best he can, and because the lives of some of the other men could be involved, some facts related to his escape and evasion cannot be discussed at this time.

Gentlemen, I present to you a gallant naval officer, Lieutenant Dieter Dengler.

Lieutenant (junior grade) DENGLER. Captain Duncan, Captain Hill, Ladies and Gentlemen of the Press.

You know I have been through some terrifying experiences, and since it is my first experience with any press, I am kind of frightened right now, but I am happy to be here and I am happy to be alive. Man, it's great to be alive! You really don't know what freedom is until you have had to escape from a Communist captivity. I tell you in our moment of desperation Lieutenant Martin and I decided we would rather die free in the bushes than to die at the Communists' hands. I am here today only to the thanks of a great many people. First, I am just about back to my original shape, just a few more pounds to go. They are still running tests at the hospital, and the doctor who is responsible for all of the excellent care is Captain Holmes at the Balboa Naval Hospital. And I want to publicly acknowledge my gratitude for the efforts of the Navy and the Air Force, who I know must have spent hours and days searching for me. That angel, that Air Force Captain Cowell and his rescue helicopter, was sure a beautiful sight. At first I couldn't believe it, and believed it only when I could smell the gasoline which he had to drop to come in. That Jolly Green Giant. But the man that I really am indebted to is Air Force Lieutenant Eugene Deatrich. He saved my life. I have expressed my gratitude and appreciation, both, to him in an official message and letter to him. This man was my answer to many prayers. I tell you, it was a miracle that he spotted me, disappeared for a moment, and after the Skyraider aircraft signaled back, I knew that he had seen me. What a great guy, a really great guy. He may not know it, but he has a great friend.

Ladies and Gentlemen, I guess the sooner we get on to the questions, the sooner Captain Holmes will finish his program with me and I can get back to the business of flying aircraft again. Thank you.

CAPTAIN HILL. Gentlemen, we will start our questions and answers with the representatives of the San Diego Union, and we would appreciate it if you would identify yourself with the question.

BOB ZIMMERMAN. Bob Zimmerman, with the San Diego Union.

Lieutenant, could you describe for us in your own words your physical surroundings while you were in prison and what a typical day there consisted of?

CAPTAIN HILL. The question is: Will you tell us about the physical surroundings and a typical day during your period of imprisonment?

Lieutenant (junior grade) DENGLER. Well, I would like to take you there to let you have your own experience, but to tell you a little bit about it, it is terrible in a way. You have no freedom—since I word it in the narrative—and you are locked up in crude wood blocks, and your hands are in handcuffs, and you usually are not being fed—sometimes someone comes in, and there is a little hole in the door to throw some leaves in there at you, and you probably eat that, and sometimes you be taken out and you be beaten for some reason you don't know.

Surroundingwise, a "basher"—we call it a "basher". It was a hut, four walls. It has a leaf roof, leaves on the top. Very hot in there, a lot of mosquitoes, a lot of leeches crawling in, snakes coming through. You name it, we had it. And they certainly let you know that you are not free there.

JERRY DUNPHY. Jerry Dunphy, KNX-TV, Los Angeles.

Lieutenant Dengler, how did you manage to escape where all others failed? How do you explain it?

Captain HILL. The question is: How did you manage to escape where others had failed?

Lieutenant (junior grade) DENGLER. I was in the prison the shortest time and maybe I was physical the most able to do so and I—my previous background in Europe and Naval Survival School helped me do the job.

JERRY DUNPHY. What do you mean by "previous background"?

Captain HILL. The question is: What about "previous background"?

Lieutenant (junior grade) DENGLER. I was—I was growing up during the war and it was a matter of taking care of yourself, and this I think done a lot for me, and I came over here in 1957, and I was on my own for quite some time, and so I was able to stand on my own feet.

HAROLD KEEN. Could you specify what the Naval Survival School in the San Diego area helped you in your experience in escaping and surviving?

Captain HILL. Mr. Keen, part of that training is of a classified nature, so we will have to forego that. If you want him to answer on survival, we will let him answer on survival, but other parts that we cannot discuss.

Mr. KEEN. Could he answer on survival then?

Captain HILL. Do you want to answer on survival?

Lieutenant (junior grade) DENGLER. Yes, sir. I got an idea of what it is to be in a prison. Of course, there are things that are going to be changed, which is the nature of the country you are in, and the food you eat is certainly different than you would find, and I think the Survival School here was more governed for European survival.

Mr. QUINN. Bert Quinn, CBS News.

According to your statements here, you carried an expired German passport with you to explain why you have an accent. Isn't this against military regulations to go into combat with anything but an I.D. card, and how can you—what is your answer to the Soviet charges that you were a West German mercenary?

Captain HILL. The question is: Will you explain your possession of your expired passport and why you happened to have it with you?

Lieutenant (junior grade) DENGLER. Yes, sir. Just as the gentleman indicated, I had the passport with me to explain my accent. I was an American pilot with a German accent. And in this passport there was a stamp that was put in when I immigrated to the United States that said that on this date Dieter Dengler immigrated to the United States, and I want to explain this and, on the other hand, I can take with me whatever I want. I am just supposed to say name, rank and serial number, as far as a pilot goes, or a naval officer, and whatever the newspaper had to say over there, oh, they say a lot.

Mr. ABBOTT. Pierce Abbott, ABC News.

Could you describe to us how Lieutenant Martin was killed?

Captain HILL. The question is: Will you describe how Lieutenant Martin was killed?

Lieutenant (junior grade) DENGLER. Sir, other than my narrative, I really don't want to go into this. I think that is something for his family and, you know—

Mr. ABBOTT. Well, the problem is, for television, your typewritten statement doesn't serve.

Captain HILL. Give them that statement, then.

Lieutenant (junior grade) DENGLER. Yes, sir.

We were—we were crawling along on hands and knees, and we crawled past the trail, and all of a sudden somebody jumped out of the bush about 20 feet away and ran, and yelling, "Americado! Americado," and swinging a machete, and just started chopping away, and he hit my friend in the leg and then his shoulder, and I really don't know what happened after that—and I just turned around and started running.

Mr. MARTIN. Clyde Martin, KOGO, San Diego.

A two-part question, Lieutenant. Were you at any time afforded any of the guarantees under the Geneva Convention; and were you afforded an opportunity to meet with a member of the International Red Cross?

Captain HILL. The question is: Were you ever afforded the guarantees of the Geneva Convention; or did you ever have an opportunity to meet representatives of the International Committee of the Red Cross?

Lieutenant (junior grade) DENGLER. Certainly not! Those people don't know what a Geneva Convention is, and they don't even realize that Europe exists. As far as they go, it is Laos, Viet Nam and Cambodia, and this is the world, and so you are being treated and you are being banged around, and as I put in the narrative, we were beaten up, and I was beaten up until you pass out, and you come back on to, and once they dragged me behind a water buffalo. They just keep doing things like that. It seems like they want to do way with us—away with you, and you have no rights whatsoever.

Mr. DUNPHY. Jerry Dunphy, KNX-TV.

Lieutenant Dengler, did you have much communication with your captors, and what did your interrogation consist of?

Captain HILL. The question is: Did you have much communication with your captors, and what communications did you have with them?

Lieutenant (junior grade) DENGLER. Yes, sir. The interrogation, as you think of it over there, is not quite as such. Initially on the travel to the prison camp I was interrogated and it was merely that I was supposed to sign a statement condemning the United States, and I refused to sign it. I gave those people my name, rank and serial number, and I was beaten and then for two days dragged behind the water buffalo. As far as communicating with the people, we did play a game with them called "Type and Kick," which is a Laotian game, and we certainly did learn the language. I can count (counting in Laotian), and words like this, and pretty soon you realize and learn the language and know what they are talking about.

CHARLES ———. Charles ———, Metro Media, Los Angeles.

Lieutenant, what sort of brainwashing were you subjected to, and can you tell us about that at all?

Captain HILL. The question is: Will you elaborate on any brainwashing that you were exposed to?

Lieutenant (junior grade) DENGLER. Sir, there wasn't any brainwashing as such. It was just merely for me to sign a statement condemning the United States, and I didn't do so, so they start beating you up until you sign, and then they beat you up and you don't sign, and they beat you up and then you pass out and they hang you upside down on a tree for five hours, and they go up in the trees full of ants, and the ants' nests, and set it over your face and just want to make you sign the statement.

Question. They hang you upside down by the heels?

Lieutenant (junior grade) DENGLER. Yeah, they tie a couple of ropes around your legs and they tie you on a limb. That happened numerous times, and they take the weapons and shoot at you. They use you as target practice.

Question. Do any of them speak English while they are going this?

Lieutenant (junior grade) DENGLER. No, sir, none of them.

Question. Did any of your fellow prisoners die from this treatment during the course of the time you were in the camp?

Captain HILL. The question is: Did any of your fellow prisoners die from this type of treatment?

Lieutenant (junior grade) DENGLER. No, sir, not at the time I was in prison there. We got pretty close, though.

Mr. DANCY. John Dancy, from NBC.

Could you tell us, Lieutenant, if you were in a prison camp in North Viet Nam or were you in Laos, and approximately how many Americans were in the camp with you?

Captain HILL. The question is: Will you clarify the location of the prison camp, and how many Americans were with you?

Lieutenant (junior grade) DENGLER. I was kept in Laos. I was kept on the Vietnamese-Laotian border. About it, I really—I am sorry, sir, I can't talk about the other prisoners, and I don't want to discuss anything about it.

Question. Will you tell us, sir, were you bombing in North Viet Nam or Laos?

Captain HILL. The question is: Were you bombing in North Viet Nam or Laos?

Lieutenant (junior grade) DENGLER. My target was in North Viet Nam. All of our targets were in North Viet Nam.

Mr. ARLINGTON. Arlington, again. May I ask this. Were you paraded publicly in many of the towns, like they say many of our prisoners are?

Captain HILL. Were you ever paraded through the villages and in front of the people?

Lieutenant (junior grade) DENGLER. Not after I did get into the prison. Initially when they put you in the prison, they march you through the villages and there you are a public—everybody is looking around you. There are 200 people around you—everybody—nobody says a word, they all turn around and they run. They take you in a hut and every crack you look at there is an eyeball. You are there for display.

Question. Lieutenant, do you feel that other prisoners in this place can get out the same way that you did?

Captain HILL. The question is: Can other prisoners get out the way you did?

Lieutenant (junior grade) DENGLER. Certainly.

Question. How many do you think have a chance of getting out, what percentage?

Captain HILL. What percentage do you think might be able to get out?

Question. A great percentage, or a small percentage?

Lieutenant (junior grade) DENGLER. A great percentage, sir.

Mr. ARMBRUSTER. Clair Armbruster, Saturday Evening Post.

Lieutenant, was your long imprisonment and was your escape from North Viet Nam or Laos?

Captain HILL. The question is: The location of your prison from which you escaped?

Lieutenant (junior grade) DENGLER. Sir, not until this moment—I knew exactly where I was, but I can assure you I did escape from Laos border, sir, Laotian-Vietnamese border, sir.

Mr. DANCY. John Dancy, from NBC.

Can you describe for us your actual escape?

Captain HILL. Will you describe your actual escape?

Lieutenant (junior grade) DENGLER. I really don't want to do this because of the prisoners in there now, and some of the pilots that may get shot down. I think they could use the same method and if I put it in the press or in the paper it may be to their disadvantage, sir.

Captain HILL. Briefly, for television, will you tell them very briefly what is in the narrative on your breakout?

Lieutenant (junior grade) DENGLER. Well, since—when I did get in the prison, they started to build a kitchen for the rainy season. It had to be constructed differently because the water comes rushing, so I realized that we would be in this prison for quite some time. And about the breakout, I started digging and loosening logs, and cutting away a little bit here and there, and I got out a couple of fences, and then got into one of their huts and was able to get some weapons of their while they were eating, and let the other guys out and handed them the weapons, and then we went to circle the guards and take them as prisoners.

Question. You said "other guys", were there more than one person who escaped with you?

Lieutenant (junior grade) DENGLER. There were more than one person present with me, yes, sir.

Question. What happened to them?

Lieutenant (junior grade) DENGLER. They escaped also, sir.

Question. What happened to them, why did not they make it to safety?

Lieutenant (junior grade) DENGLER. I really don't know, sir.

Question. Can you tell us how many escaped with you?

Lieutenant (junior grade) DENGLER. Yes, sir. There were six more, sir.

Question. Did any of the other prisoners sign the statement that you were asked to sign?

Lieutenant (junior grade) DENGLER. I don't know. Not to my knowledge, sir. We didn't talk about things like that, and I really don't think so.

Question. Lieutenant, do you expect to be returned to active duty in Viet Nam?

Captain HILL. The question is: Do you expect to be returned to active duty in Viet Nam?

Lieutenant (junior grade) DENGLER. I hope not, but if Uncle Sam wants me, I certainly will be on my way.

Question. Can the Captain give us any clue on that?

Captain HILL. He is still under medical treatment at Balboa Hospital. We are speculating on some additional duties for him, but he is not going to WestPac any time soon.

Question. Do you plan to get married in the near future?

Lieutenant (junior grade) DENGLER. That is correct, sir.

Question. Are you going to marry the young lady who is an assistant to a psychiatrist at Stanford University?

Lieutenant (junior grade) DENGLER. That is negative.

Mr. DUNPHY. Dunphy again. Was there any single turn of events that made the difference in your escape, one single turn of events—you were the only one—

Captain HILL. Was there any single event, turn of events that motivated you for this escape?

Lieutenant (junior grade) DENGLER. Do you mean before I got out that motivated me to do it?

Question. Yes. Any single thing that happened while you were in that made the difference in your getting out?

Lieutenant (Junior Grade) DENGLER. Well, as I indicated, we all did get out, but I wanted to be free. I wanted to go back home and I kept driving on this point, and Lieutenant Martin also, and the other prisoners were very weak, and we all decided that it would be better for us to wait for the rainy season because this is your biggest problem, the water in the jungle, so we had to wait until it starts to rain.

Mr. ARLINGTON. This is Arlington, Metro Media, again.

Can you tell us a little more about the tortures to which you were subjected and when they became their worst—after this first escape, what was the story there? What was the nature of them, other than the fact that they hung you from the trees, and were you unconscious at any time?

Captain HILL. The question is: Will you elaborate on the harrassment, the torturing that you endured during the prison time?

Lieutenant (Junior Grade) DENGLER. Well, I would say being dragged by the water buffalo was about the worst. But the other times, don't forget, those people, they believe in ghosts. If a child is born, they squeeze their head so that they be ugly so the ghost won't like it, or cut an ear off, or sometimes the guard thinks you are the ghost and you better watch out, they come in and start beating you up trying to drive the ghost away, so even during the time in prison—in prison, we have been hanged up and hung up and beaten, and once I—I must have been unconscious for three or four hours. In fact, they tied us so tight that they cut the nerves off and my hand was lame and I couldn't use my hand, and they tried to do the same thing to my right hand, but I was able to move it a little bit.

Question. Was this just an unprovoked attack upon you?

Captain HILL. Was this an unprovoked attack that they made on you from time to time?

Lieutenant (junior grade) DENGLER. No, they did it to all of us. I was—at that time I was unfamiliar with the customs and one time I tried to chase a chicken away from the hut, like this, and it was a taboo, and so I just done them wrong and they took me out for a couple of days and worked me over.

Mr. ANDERSON. Lieutenant, you said these people don't even know where Europe is or if it exists. How much do they understand of the war?

Captain HILL. The question is: Do you have any knowledge of how much they understand of the war that is going on over there?

Lieutenant (junior grade) DENGLER. That seems to be the trouble over there. Nobody understands anything. They cannot talk English; they cannot write their own language; they can't read their own language; and their propaganda is so tremendous that we call a big man a guy with a radio. He will come in and he will gouge these people. He says, "The way you find sugar is you dig a hole," and they go actually down and dig for hours and days trying to find sugar. They said they have shot down about 35,000 U.S. aircraft and Uncle Sam is going to go broke by shooting down aircraft, and they say Uncle Sam is there to get all of their gold, or tin, or their copper, and they all believe everything. And so, even the guy—even to sit there, the guy next to him is dying right now because of a lack of food, he still will say, "Oh, the government won't let you down," and it's obvious that there is no food left, so they believe everything you tell them.

Question. Does the International Red Cross see you while you were there and do they play any important role while you were held captive?

Captain HILL. Did you see any representatives of the International Committee of Red Cross during your period of imprisonment?

Lieutenant (junior grade) Dengler. No, sir, I never did and I never heard of it, and none of my fellow prisoners did.

Question. Would you have him repeat that escape thing, briefly? I guess I was changing film during that time you mentioned it.

Captain HILL. Well, we will pick it up at the end of the conference. Let's go on.

Mr. KEEN. Could you, for television, briefly describe your period of 23 days in the bush and the jungle, and how you managed to survive?

Captain HILL. The question is: Will you elaborate on the period of escape, from time of escape to time of rescue, just briefly, for television?

Lieutenant (junior grade) DENGLER. Well, sir—well, briefly, I go through a day—the thing is, we were weak when we left. We crawled at this time already. During this time in prison, I didn't walk further than 20 yards, so, first of all, I had to start walking again, and learn to walk again. Then we were in the bush and the animals—there are tigers, elephants, bears—but those things usually don't bother you. The small things, the lints, the mosquitoes. You inhale, you just swallow 50 mosquitoes. The leeches, they crawl up on your legs and they put some saliva on you, and they drop off, and it keeps bleeding. You pull up your trousers and there will be 200 of them, and you will bleed and bleed and bleed. Those are the things that bother you. You don't know where you left, you don't know where you are, and you don't know where you are going. You don't have a compass. The country is so dense—Captain Hill, sitting there, I couldn't see him, so actually that is the reason that we selected to go down the river. We wanted to go to a river and maybe float out, or something like this, but then the nights are the worst, I would think. It is raining and you are shivering, and you hold on to each other, and you hug each other, and you put your cheek next to your buddy and you play together, and you cry together, and you pray to go home, to be free, or sometimes you even think maybe it would be great not even to wake up because it is just so miserable. And the worst thing is that somebody is hunting you all of the time.

Question. Lieutenant Dengler, do you know if Chinese pilots are being used by the North Vietnamese?

Captain HILL. The question is: Do you have any knowledge of Chinese pilots flying for the North Vietnamese?

Lieutenant (junior grade) DENGLER. No, sir, I really don't.

Question. Another question. Is the temper of the North Vietnamese such that war crimes trials seem likely to you?

Captain HILL. The question is: Do you feel that there may be war crimes trials by the North Vietnamese?

Lieutenant (junior grade) DENGLER. Well, that is something I was worried about because I heard about it before I was shot down, and they started talking about it used before, years ago, and nothing have come of it, and now I really don't know myself, sir.

Mr. MARTIN. Clyde Martin, KOGO, San Diego.

Lieutenant, what is your reaction to the anti-Viet Nam demonstrations that have taken place in this country?

Captain HILL. The question is: What is your reaction to the anti-Vietnamese demonstrations that have been going on throughout the country?

Lieutenant (junior grade) DENGLER. Well, I certainly don't like to see them, but I am in no position to discuss them, and this is the great thing about this country, anyone can do as he pleases.

Mr. KEEN. Do you intend to remain in the service, or are you planning to return to civilian life?

Captain HILL. The question is: Are you planning to remain in the service or return to civilian life?

Lieutenant (junior grade) DENGLER. Well, while I was in prison, all we did talk about was food. We talked about deep freezers and refrigerators, stacking them up, and I decided I am coming back home and I am going to build a restaurant, a German-type restaurant, and I am going to stack it up and never be hungry again. Now I came back and I eat well, and there is quite some time I do have left in the military, and so I don't know which way I may turn, sir.

Question. Speaking of food, if you haven't done so, already, can you give us some idea of what the menu in prison was, and if it changed at all?

Captain HILL. The question is: Will you tell us what the menu was in prison, and does it change from day to day?

Lieutenant (junior grade) DENGLER. Initially—initially, February, March, and April, the food was better. We got one handful of rice a day. In fact, in February we had enough even to ask for seconds. Now, if the people ate that much themselves, you may get half of it, but starting May, the food got so scarce that we got fed a little bowl like that every two or three days, then we just walk out and pick leaves, grass, and we supplemented our food with things that actually crawled through our huts, like snakes. One time I lay like that and I looked down and a snake was going in here and coming out of the bottom, and we caught it and ate it. One morning when a snake on a post up above me had just eaten

a couple of rats, we cut it open and we ate the rats and the snake. So, anything that crawled, that is meat.

Question. I wonder if you could describe the morale of the enemy? Could you detect a good or bad morale?

Captain HILL. Will you describe the morale of the enemy, the people that were holding you?

Lieutenant (junior grade) DENGLER. The people are—well, let me say one thing. The Laotian people themselves are good people. They never did harm me in any way. It is the Pathet Lao. It is the military man who is trained by the North Vietnamese because I saw numerous of them there. And morale, they don't care. They run out of food, they lay down and sing; they be hungry and a monkey is right in the tree hollering away, so the morale gets really bad when they are hungry. Watch out for us! Because when they are hungry, they come after us.

Question. Lieutenant, how would you assess our bombing raids on the North Vietnamese; are they effective? Can you describe the dense jungle and how the people live?

Captain HILL. I want to hold this question for a moment. I am not sure that the Lieutenant at his echelon can—that he can evaluate something of that magnitude, Clyde, if you will forego it.

Mr. ANDERSON. Lieutenant, earlier you said that the enemy troops believe the government won't let them down. Does that indicate that they will keep fighting for an extended period of time?

Captain HILL. The question is: Do you think that the Pathet Lao, in their control of the people, will continue to fight in order to get the government?

Lieutenant (junior grade) DENGLER. It seemed to us that there was an internal war between the Pathet Lao and the villagers, because the military people, they go in the village and they tax the people. They say, "You owe us so much rice, you owe us so much," so the villagers have nothing left, so they hate them, so they keep asking them, they said, "When is the war going to be over? Tell us, when can we go in our fields again?" So, the villagers, they want to quit right away, and the soldiers, too. It is just that the government keeps pushing and pushing and pushing.

Question. Colonel Armbruster again, Lieutenant. How much weight did you lose during your imprisonment?

Captain HILL. The question is: How much weight did you lose during your imprisonment?

Lieutenant (junior grade) DENGLER. I lost 59 pounds, sir. I mean, during the imprisonment and the escape. I weighed 98 pounds when I got back.

Question. Lieutenant, what were your injuries, what was wrong with you at the time of your rescue?

Captain HILL. The question is—you were talking about physical condition?

Question. That's right.

Captain HILL. What was your physical condition at the time of your rescue?

Lieutenant (junior grade) DENGLER. Well, I still had trouble with my hand, which was lame. It slowly did come back, the left hand; and my eyes, because of vitamin shortage and hardly eating any meat, I couldn't see out of the left eye and I was seeing things. I look out both of my eyes and I see people skiing around, people in chariot races, or somebody is calling me, and the last four days were the worst days, after I had lost my friend, Duane, because we were one now, we were good friends, and I was already gone a little bit, so when I heard the chopper and the aircraft, I went in the bush. And when they dropped the gas, I smelled it, and I said, "Man, that is Uncle Sam's gas. That is real." So out I went and I laid down an SOS.

Question. May I ask this. Did you suffer any personal indignities during the course of your trial, without elaborating what they might be, physically, to your person? Do you understand what I mean?

Lieutenant (junior grade) DENGLER. Well—

Captain HILL. Did you suffer any personal indignities during your imprisonment—personal?

Lieutenant (junior grade) DENGLER. You mean permanent? Well, initially—initially, February, March, we were allowed to go to the bathroom in the morning for about two minutes, and we had—we had a couple of tubes you go in at night, and you can't imagine, you are in the block of woods and handcuffed, and you got to go to the bathroom at night, and the guy having diarrhea or dysentery, so it was a real mess, but while we walked down—we run down like hell, there is about a 20 or 30 foot walk to the hole, and while we did this, they

shot at us and it got so close that some of the prisoners came back, say, with black in the face, or crease their hair with a bullet, so we didn't want to go any more, we would rather stay with the tubes.

Question. Why were they shooting at you?

Captain HILL. The question is: Why were they shooting at you?

Lieutenant (junior grade) DENGLER. Just harassment. They will take a gun and show it to you—they put a round in it and put it at your head, and they laugh and say, "Ricardi, ricardi away," and stuff like that, and I am lucky to be here.

Question. What happened after February and March?

Captain HILL. The question is: What happened after February and March?

Lieutenant (junior grade) DENGLER. The food just got scarce. Now they start eating their own—the rice that they had saved for planting, and no more food was coming in. It is the rice that most of them live on. Tapioca, maybe. A chicken, they call them the Cadillac. One chicken, sometimes they get that big, will feed 17 people for three days. So they themselves have nothing. When I got there, the villagers, they were well—they were weld together. By the time I escaped, they were as thin as rails themselves.

Question. Would you describe North Viet Nam's air defenses as formidable and effective?

Captain HILL. I think we are going to skip this question since this was his first flight and he is probably not knowledgeable in that.

Question. Ray Means, with the United Press. I just want to clarify whether both the North Vietnamese and the Pathet Lao held him captive or just the Pathet Lao?

Captain HILL. The question is: Will you clarify it, was it both the Pathet Lao and the North Vietnamese, or one or the other, that held you captive?

Lieutenant (junior grade) DENGLER. The person that kept me captive was the Pathet Lao, but the person who trains them, who drives the trucks through the country and gouges them, and comes and inspects the prison and tells them what to do, he is the North Vietnamese.

Question. How long did you live in Pacifica, and do you plan to move back?

Captain HILL. The question is: How long did you live in Pacifica, and are you planning to return?

Lieutenant (junior grade) DENGLER. I never lived there. It is my brother who is there. So, I was in Alameda and I will return for a visit, but it is not my home.

Question. Did I understand correctly that this was your first flight over North Viet Nam when you were shot down?

Lieutenant (junior grade) DENGLER. That is correct.

Question. You had flown over South Viet Nam?

Lieutenant (junior grade) DENGLER. That is correct, sir. We had come up from DIXIE.

Question. I wonder, just for the record, as the result of your debriefing, what areas pertaining to your capture and imprisonment and escape can't you talk about?

Captain HILL. I am going to hold that one because there are security informations in that that he has given to the officials, and these are the areas that we can't touch.

Question. In the reply to that, that would be restricted? The area—I am talking about the broad areas. That he cannot talk about?

Captain HILL. The broad areas would open it up.

Mr. KEEN. Could you identify your fiancee for us?

Lieutenant (junior grade) DENGLER. Yes. Her name is Morena Adamich.

Question. Where does she live?

Lieutenant (junior grade) DENGLER. She lives in Belmont, sir.

Question. Belmont?

Lieutenant (junior grade) DENGLER. Belmont, California.

Question. What is her occupation?

Lieutenant (junior grade) DENGLER. I think you are getting kind of personal here, so I—

Question. What is her age?

Lieutenant (junior grade) DENGLER. I will tell you about her occupation. She works as a research assistant at the Stanford Laboratories.

Question. Have you had a chance to visit with your mother?

Lieutenant (junior grade) DENGLER. Yes, sir.

Captain HILL. She is in the back of the auditorium. The question is: Have you had a chance to visit with your mother?

Lieutenant (junior grade) DENGLER. Yes, sir. My mother has been here for a few days, sir.

Question. Let me ask you this. What was the morale of the other prisoners with you? Did you plot to escape, and were your hopes high that eventually you would get out, or did it appear to be a lost cause?

Captain HILL. What was the morale of the other prisoners concerned during your preparations for escape?

Lieutenant (junior grade) DENGLER. The morale—we had a little program set up there. When I got there—well, they had a religious service on Sunday, the Reverend Dengler, and I would get up and make a little speech, or on Mondays I'd talk about the movie, and Wednesday another fellow talks about a flick we knew, and then Duane, who was a history major—I was particularly impressed with American History—and so most every plot we talked about was real dull, so we kept talking to each other. Once we even made a chess-board and we played chess, so we occupied ourselves that way.

Question. Was there any forced hard labor?

Captain HILL. Was there any forced hard labor?

Lieutenant (junior grade) DENGLER. None at all. Always locked up.

Question. Captain, can you tell us anything about the value of the debriefing of Lieutenant Dengler?

Captain HILL. I think the value of his debriefing is going to be extremely helpful to all of our pilots that are flying over there, yes, sir. That is all I am going to say.

Question. When do you plan to be married, Lieutenant?

Captain HILL. The question is: When do you plan to be married?

Lieutenant (Junior Grade) DENGLER. Oh, that is rather a personal one. That is personal. I really don't want to discuss it.

Captain HILL. I think we have got time for about two more questions.

Question. Has the date been set?

Lieutenant (Junior Grade) DENGLER. Yes, sir, the date has been set. Let us say this—I am committed now.

Question. What are your future plans? Are you going to remain a military man; are you going to have a career as a commercial pilot, or what?

Captain HILL. The question is: What are your future intentions?

Lieutenant (Junior Grade) DENGLER. Well, the restaurant business still looks favorable, but I haven't decided yet.

Captain HILL. A couple of more questions?

Question. What is your weight now, sir, and how does it compare with your previous weight?

Lieutenant (Junior Grade) DENGLER. I weigh 143 pounds now and my previous weight was 157.

Captain HILL. We can have one more question.

Question: Mr. Keen. Could you compare the escape experience here, your survival, with that when you were a boy going through the forest in Germany, and also, what kept your spirits going, what kept you feeling you would eventually be rescued?

Captain HILL. The question is: Will you compare your escape, your recent escape, with that that you made in Germany and what kept you going?

Lieutenant (junior grade) DENGLER. Well, I can hardly make a comparison since I was just a boy then, but in this escape I was angry, they wanted me—they wanted us all to die, and as I indicated, we would rather die free in a bush than those guys not feeding us or shooting us, and I wanted to be free. I wanted to come home, and I wanted to open this restaurant, and I wanted to see my mother again, and I wanted to see my friends again, and I wanted to fly again, and so—and I kept pushing on, and every step you cry, say, "Oh, I want to go home," or "God help me, let me go home," and you push on.

Captain HILL. One last question, then we will return to the one for TV. Do we have any other question here?

Will somebody ask the question for television and to repeat what is in the narrative concerning your escape one more time.

Question. Ask the question, please.

Captain HILL. All right. The question is: Will you state briefly the escape outlined in the narrative that the press people have?

Lieutenant (junior grade) DENGLER. When I did go with the other prisoners, I realized that they moved them around quite frequently from prison to prison, but then they started building the kitchen, the rainy season kitchen. We realized that we were going to be there for quite some time, so I managed to slip out of

the blocks and the handcuffs and I was able to loosen some logs, digging around them, and slipped out a couple of times at night to work on the fence outside, and I got through the fences, and while they were around on the other side eating in the kitchen, I was able to crawl in one of their huts and dig out their weapons and ammunition and load them up, and my fellow prisoners came out through the same hole, and I handed them the guns, and they split up as we had planned, a couple running this way and a couple running that way, and hit them at once.

Captain HILL. Gentlemen, I believe that concludes our formal press conference.

Mr. KEEN. Can we get a copy of his initial statement, Captain Hill?

Captain HILL. We will work it out, right.

The press conference terminated (approximately 1120 hours).

[News Release, Office of Assistant Secretary of Defense (Public Affairs), Washington, D.C.]

SEPTEMBER 13, 1966.

FOR THE PRESS

The following is the account of the capture, escape and evasion of Lieutenant (junior grade) Dieter Dengler, USNR, as he related it to Naval personnel after his return to U.S. control and while he has been a patient at the U.S. Naval Hospital, San Diego, California.

On the morning of February 1, 1966, Lieutenant (junior grade) Dieter Dengler, 28, a medium-built pilot of 157 pounds, took off from the 75,000-ton aircraft carrier USS RANGER in his A-1H attack plane on an interdiction mission against line of communications targets in North Vietnam near the Laotian border. He took with him a combination of personal gear and normal evasion and survival equipment. This included a compass on his watchband, a pistol, a fishing line and extra hooks, a mirror, high protein foodstuffs such as raisins, salted nuts and pepperoni, extra clothing and a green waterproof nylon sleeping bag.

As he rolled in against his targets in murky weather, Dengler's Skyraider aircraft was hit heavily in the right wing by ground fire. He dropped his ordnance and scored direct hits. Fighting to maintain control of his plane, Dengler kept an indicated air speed of 120 to 140 knots. As the crippled aircraft wobbled westward he jettisoned his flight charts in a densely wooded area, unstrapped his parachute, and maneuvered to a small clearing in Laos across the border from North Vietnam, where he rode the plane into a crash landing. With his charts gone and his aircraft damaged, the pilot was uncertain exactly where he crashed. As Dengler crash-landed, both wings and the tail of his Skyraider were sheared off by trees at the edge of the clearing. The fuselage cartwheeled along the ground. There was no fire.

Dengler's helmet was torn off in the impact, but his shoulder harness straps retained him in the cockpit. Although dazed, he managed to crawl out of the demolished aircraft and reached a nearby creek. His lower left leg was bruised severely, and he was bleeding from a cut behind his right ear.

In a matter of minutes Dengler heard yelling and shouting close by. He was certain he had been detected. Hastily, he buried his equipment, including a radio and survival gear. He also hid his .38 pistol. The shouting continued. The pilot decided to move further away from the crash scene to the safety of the nearby underbrush. It was his intention to return later for the survival gear he had hidden, and if possible to use his emergency radio when it would be safe for rescue pilots to reach him without the danger of their being ambushed.

Dengler moved cautiously. He circled a number of jungle clearings, avoided animal traps and managed to reach a river where he rested.

Dengler thought to himself that rescue aircraft would be out to search for him. At dark he did see such aircraft but he had no means to signal them. The survival gear which he had hidden included his signaling flares.

That night he slept in the lightweight nylon sleeping bag until about 0300 when he was awakened by a jungle animal crawling on his legs. Dengler waited for dawn and then started moving again.

Recalling lessons he had learned at the Navy's survival school at Warner Springs, California, from which he successfully escaped and evaded twice, Dengler carefully avoided clearings and inhabited areas. He continued moving cautiously. There were several times when he heard and saw aircraft, but he was unable to establish any contact.

On noon of the day after the crash, while crossing a trail, Dengler was confronted suddenly from the heavy bush by two men wearing U.S.-type shirts and

trousers, sunglasses and rubber boots. These two were armed with a rifle and pistol. They were joined quickly by another man who guided them throughout the afternoon. Dengler's captors, the Pathet Lao, immediately took his watch, compass and other personal items and ran him at a double-time to their camp where they arrived at dusk.

All clearings were avoided in an obvious effort to prevent detection from the air, and all movements stopped instantly at the first sound of aircraft.

Village people were used to lead Dengler and his captors from one village to the next. Each of the captors was dressed differently. They wore no rank or insignia. None spoke English.

The first night after his capture Dengler, fatigued and hungry, was forced to lie on his back in spread-eagled fashion with his hands and legs tied at fourstakes. He was attacked by swarms of mosquitos, leeches and other insects and his face became swollen.

The next day, the pilot and his captors moved again from one village to another. Most of the villages through which they passed were deserted. The people lived in the surrounding woods and came out of the bush only to tend crops—but at this time also to stare at the captured pilot.

On the evening of the third day of his capture, two permanent Pathet Lao guards were assigned to accompany Dengler. Some of his original captors departed. Again that evening he was spreadeagled.

In one village where they stopped, Dengler was tied to a tree and used for harassment target practice. The bullets tore limbs from the tree close by his head. One time one of his captors held a rifle next to his left ear and pulled the trigger. This caused a deafness in that ear for several months.

Dengler had no means of communication with his captors except by hand signs and other motions until they reached a larger village where a man, evidently a province chief, questioned him in broken French. Dengler told this official that he had been born in Germany and had become a naturalized U.S. citizen in 1960.

The province official took from Dengler's guards the Lieutenant's I.D. card, his Geneva Convention Card, and his expired German passport which he had used when he came to the United States in 1957. Speaking in broken French, Dengler said he carried the expired passport because he thought it might help explain his German accent. Dengler emphasized to his interrogator that the only current documents in his possession were the I.D. and Geneva Convention Cards.

Patiently but persistently, the French-speaking man asked Dengler a number of questions, which the pilot refused to answer. In response to the interrogation, Dengler gave only his name, rank, service number and date of birth.

Later that evening, this official returned and offered Dengler an opportunity to write letters to his family. Provided with paper and a pen, Dengler printed a letter to his fiancee and another letter to his mother. At the bottom of each letter he wrote his name. The next day Dengler was given a one-page Communist propaganda statement condemning the United States, and was told to sign it. He refused. Again he was told to sign this document. When he refused, he was beaten severely. He signed nothing.

That afternoon, there was additional interrogation and there were more beatings. The provoked official and his comrades struck Dengler with sticks and with their fists. He was beaten into unconsciousness during this period.

When he continued to refuse to answer questions, Dengler was tied behind a water buffalo, which dragged him through the bush. The interrogations and the beatings continued for three days. The next day the Navy pilot and his captors resumed their march.

During one nighttime march, Dengler was able to steal a small mirror from the tobacco box of a guard.

On the eighth night, with a guard sleeping heavily on each side of him, Dengler loosened the bonds on his hands and got up without being detected. Quickly, he retrieved his shoes, which were taken from him each night, gathered up his sleeping bag and escaped down a narrow trail. He evaded for several hours, only to discover that in the jungle thickness he had circled back to the trail where he had started.

Unable to go any further without rest, Dengler crawled into his sleeping bag and slept. At dawn, he woke and climbed a nearby mountain peak. It was his hope to signal an aircraft now that he had a mirror. Aircraft did approach, Dengler signaled but was unable to attract any attention.

By early afternoon, Dengler was suffering from dehydration in the intense heat. He was forced to return to the valley below for water. He located a

watering hole, waited briefly, and was quenching his thirst when he was detected and recaptured. During the beating and harassment that followed, his captors became involved in some wild shooting and two of the guards were wounded.

Obviously irked over Dengler's escape, the men tied him upside down on a tree and beat him.

After this recapture, North Vietnamese soldiers assumed guard responsibility and marched for three more days. At noon on the third day Dengler arrived at a compound which had numerous Soviet-type jeeps. On the fourth day—this was now the 14th day after the crash of his aircraft—Dengler arrived at a jungle prison where he was kept with six other prisoners until February 22nd. That day he was moved with the other prisoners over a three-hour walk to a bamboo stockade. By then some of the prisoners already had been in Communist hands for more than two years. The prisoners were detained in primitive thatched-roofed huts called "Bashers," under surveillance of armed guards. All the prisoners were suffering from malnutrition.

Immediately upon his arrival at the first prison camp, Dengler urged that an immediate escape attempt be made. The other prisoners, with one exception, argued that it would be better to wait for the spring monsoon. They maintained that it would be easier to travel at that time. Dengler and the other prisoner, U.S. Air Force First Lieutenant Duane Martin, a helicopter rescue pilot, went along with this decision.

During the waiting period, a new Commandant—the prisoners called him "Little Hitler"—took over and conditions at the prison camp worsened. Food, mostly rice, became scarce. Sometimes, the prisoners were able to supplement this with snakes and rats. At other times, they were given raw rotten meat. Dengler and Martin, who both had previously escaped or evaded were constantly harassed by the guards and were shackled day and night. The physical condition of all prisoners deteriorated as a result of repeated attacks of dysentery and other diseases.

There was little for them to do. No reading material was provided. Occasionally they were forced to listen to the broadcasts of "Hanoi Hanna." The typical camp routine permitted the prisoners to be led out in the morning to empty their bamboo toilet pails. Sometimes they were permitted outside to eat. At all other times, they were confined to their huts, locked up in crude wooden foot blocks and handcuffed.

As April, May and most of June passed without the long awaited rains, the prisoners grew restive. Sick, tired and starving they learned of the guards' plan to kill their prisoners and keep the scarce food for themselves. On the night of June 29th they decided to execute their escape plan. Dengler worked his way free of the foot blocks and the handcuffs, as he had done many times before, and slipped out the rear of his hut. He moved stealthily and stole four guns—two M-1's, a carbine and a Chinese rifle—while the guards were eating. According to plan, Dengler passed the weapons out to his fellow prisoners. The escape was interrupted when two of the other prisoners were spotted. The guards rushed out of the kitchen hut, saw Dengler and fired at him. In self-defense Dengler returned the fire and in the exchange six of the guards were killed. Two others scrambled into the jungle and fled.

The prisoners gathered up some food then split up into groups. Dengler and Martin stayed together. Both were barefooted.

Soon after this escape, Martin was stricken with malaria and several days later Dengler contracted jaundice. The two men, mindful of their impaired physical condition, decided to risk travel along a creek, rather than through the dense jungle.

On the evening of July 1st, they managed to build a lean-to and slept there most of the night. During the second day they survived on a handful of rice which they had taken from the prison guards and some snails which they had found along the way. The creek on which they were traveling had high waterfalls with steep walls and cliffs. They followed the creek for two more days. Their travel became increasingly difficult due to the high ridges and cliffs. Painfully, they constructed a raft, but lost it in a waterfall.

On what they estimated to be the 10th day after their escape, the two men found an abandoned village. Martin now was desperately ill with malaria. They decided to stay together in a deserted hut.

The night of the 11th day and the morning of the 12th, they floated down a river on a small raft that they found near the deserted village. As they floated in the darkness, the raft bumped into a man who was fishing in the river. The fisherman fled and Dengler and Martin floated on for several hundred yards, discarded the raft, then traveled by foot until dawn.

On the afternoon of the 12th day, they continued to travel until they found another small abandoned village with two or three huts in it. The next morning they found some corn. After eating this, they traveled east over the mountain and to their shock found themselves back at the village where they had picked up the raft. Because Martin now was too sick to travel, they decided to stay and attempt air contact.

On the morning of the fourteenth day Dengler left Martin to locate material to make contact with aircraft. On the 15th day he returned and made a signal fire. They prayed that their fire had been seen. But the next day no rescue aircraft came.

On the 17th day after their escape, Denger and Martin walked and crawled toward what they thought was another abandoned village. They moved on their hands and knees to within 20 feet of a hut. Someone shouted and suddenly a villager leaped from a hidden hut on the right. He carried a long machete which was curved at the end.

Without warning the villager attacked with his machete. Martin was slightly ahead of Dengler, in a crouched position. The villager struck Martin twice with his machete. The first blow hit Martin in the left leg and the second blow hit him at the junction of his left shoulder and neck. Martin collapsed, mortally wounded. The villager swung at Dengler, but missed. Gathering his remaining strength, Dengler dove into the bush and fled up a gully.

Shaken, hungry and nearly out of his mind, Dengler continued on alone.

That same night, Dengler returned to the village where he and Martin had stayed, and burned it to the ground. He hid close by that night as a plane flew overhead dropping parachute flares.

On the 18th day, Dengler climbed to the top of a ridge where he laid out an SOS signal, using panels from a parachute flare he had found. He waited all day and night on the ridge for rescue. The next morning, the 19th day, Dengler followed a river and narrowly avoided a search party.

During these last days of his evasion, suffering from malnutrition, jaundice and fatigue, Dengler repeatedly lost consciousness, probably 20 or 30 times. Having made this escape and evasion completely barefooted, he was bleeding from cut and bruised feet which had become badly swollen.

During the 20th and 21st days, Dengler crawled short distances close by a stream, and used what remaining strength he had to keep clear of search parties and to watch for rescue aircraft. On the morning of the 22nd day, he managed to lay out some panels from the parachute flare in the form of a crude SOS on a bed of rocks. He continued prayers for rescue. An Air Force A-1 Skyraider, piloted by Lt. Colonel Eugene Deatrick, spotted him. Dengler used all his strength to wave. Then he collapsed as the Skyraider circled. At approximately 11:00 a.m., an Air Force rescue helicopter, with Captain William E. Cowell at the controls, flew overhead. Dengler saw it and watched the helicopter crew drop a rescue harness, which lifted him to safety. At that time, Dengler weighed 98 pounds. Aboard the helicopter, he clutched the leg of a rescue crewman throughout the flight back to Da Nang.

Chairman RUSSELL. Now, from a security point of view, the Chair has been advised that there are three areas that it is inadvisable to discuss fully in public, and the Chair knows that this committee will cooperate in avoiding discussion in open session in these areas.

They are (1) disclosure of information about military operations that would jeopardize the lives of any of our fighting men who are still fighting in that area; (2) details concerning the other prisoners in the camp where Mr. Dengler was held except that other gallant American, Air Force Capt. Duane Martin; and, (3) tactics and techniques that an escaped U.S. military prisoner employed in eluding his captors. We will ask Mr. Dengler not to hesitate to inform us if he thinks that his answer to any question would violate security or impair the life of any American.

To give every member of the committee an opportunity to ask questions of particular interest to him without waiting an unreasonable period, the Chair suggests that our period of questioning on the initial round be limited to not more than 5 minutes for each Senator.

Mr. Dengler, the committee is indeed pleased to have you with us this morning. I am pleased on behalf of the committee to be permitted to salute you for the admirable qualities of manhood that you have demonstrated.

The committee will be glad to hear any statement you may wish to make before we start our questions.

STATEMENT OF LT. (JG.) DIETER DENGLER, U.S. NAVAL RESERVE

Lieutenant DENGLER. Thank you, sir.

Mr. Chairman, Senators, this is my first visit to Washington, and it is a real privilege and honor to be invited here today. I thank everyone. Thank you.

During my meeting with the newsmen on Tuesday I was able to tell how happy I am to be alive and especially to be a free man. You really do not know what freedom is unless you have to escape from Communist activity. We decided we would much rather die free in the jungle than to be beaten, starved, or shot by the Communists. I know freedom is the greatest value that can be taken away from you.

My friend, Air Force Lt. Duane Martin, spent hours in the prison camp telling me about American history, Government procedures, and I am truly delighted to be here and see our Congress in action.

I am German-born but I am 100 percent American. I am a naval officer who serves my country to the best of my abilities.

I would like to tell you about two Americans who hold a special meaning to me. The man I am really indebted to is Air Force Lt. Col. Eugene Deatruck. He saved my life. When his search aircraft flew overhead and circled back for a second look it was the most beautiful sight I had ever seen. It truly must have been a miracle that he was able to spot such a tiny figure waving from a rocky gully near that riverbed.

It was not too long before another Air Force pilot, Capt. William Cowell in his rescue helicopter came along, dropped his rescue line, and lifted me to freedom.

Mr. Chairman, Senators, again I want to express my gratitude for the opportunity to be here today.

Thank you.

Chairman RUSSELL. Mr. Dengler, I read the account of your experiences and the way you were captured. I was interested in the fact that your captors had what appeared to be American military uniforms and equipment, in part. Were those captors North Vietnamese or Pathet Lao?

Lieutenant DENGLER. Mr. Chairman, I was kept by the Pathet Lao, but during my travel and stay in Laos it was very apparent that the North Vietnamese run the place. They drive the trucks, they teach them how to shoot, they teach them in guerrilla warfare, and if a problem comes up that a Pathet Lao cannot handle, it is the North Vietnamese who do it. So it is really apparent that the North Vietnamese are in there. And I saw, I must have seen, 200 or 300 North Vietnamese soldiers, sir.

Chairman RUSSELL. I believe you stated when you escaped you seized a couple of M-1's and, perhaps, a carbine. Were they American manufactured?

Lieutenant DENGLER. Mr. Chairman, that is correct, sir.

Chairman RUSSELL. Was there much American military equipment in that area that you saw?

Lieutenant DENGLER. No, sir. I was kept in a hut, and I wasn't allowed to leave. So the only things that I did see of American origination were the weapons, M-1's and the carbines, sir.

Chairman RUSSELL. As you were marched from day to day by these North Vietnamese soldiers and put on display in these villages, you did not notice any American equipment there?

Lieutenant DENGLER. Mr. Chairman, the North Vietnamese soldiers all carry Soviet-type weapons.

Chairman RUSSELL. At any time during your imprisonment were you or any of your fellow prisoners given any of the protection of the Geneva Convention or allowed any contact with the International Red Cross, or did you seek any such contact?

Lieutenant DENGLER. Mr. Chairman, we were not given, not even once were we given the opportunity to write a letter or to see a medical officer. We weren't fed like we were supposed to be. The people that did keep us are so ignorant; the world for them is Cambodia, North Vietnam, and Laos. They do not realize the United States exists. They do not realize Europe exists. They never have heard of Geneva. We were kept just like animals and we had no rights whatsoever. We never were let outside in the yard to exercise for 5 or 10 minutes, even to walk around. We were constantly kept in crude wooden foot blocks, small holes for your foot to be stuck through secured there by a pin, and wrists locked with handcuffs. Later on, starting in April, May, and June, we weren't even allowed to go to the bathroom any more.

Chairman RUSSELL. There was something in your statement about your being permitted to write a letter or, perhaps, two letters. As a matter of curiosity, were any of those letters ever delivered to the addressees, the persons you sent them to?

Lieutenant DENGLER. Mr. Chairman, no; they never were. It seemed to me it was an invitation of friendliness to let me write the letters, so later on I would sign the statement the French-speaking official wanted me to sign. Or perhaps he wanted to get the address of my parents, so I really do not know exactly what his motivation was, sir.

Chairman RUSSELL. So that that was written before you declined to sign the document attacking this country, and you think that was a lead to get you to sign that document and the letters, therefore, were never mailed?

Lieutenant DENGLER. Yes, sir. Mr. Chairman, when I traveled to the prison camp it was during this time that I met this man; he called himself a province chief, and he offered to let me write letters. He was very friendly initially. He said, "Here is some paper, write home," which I did. But later on he turned out to be a real bad egg, sir.

Chairman RUSSELL. After which he presented you this paper he wished to have you sign.

Lieutenant DENGLER. Yes, sir. He said, "Don't you agree that you are doing the wrong thing, and the United States is doing the wrong thing?" And the paper condemned the United States, and he wanted me to sign it.

Chairman RUSSELL. Did you give him your name, rank, and serial number, and so forth, and tell him that was all you were supposed to give?

Lieutenant DENGLER. That is correct, sir—name, rank, and serial number.

Chairman RUSSELL. That did not satisfy him?

Lieutenant DENGLER. No, sir; it really didn't.

Chairman RUSSELL. Can you tell us anything about the relationship between the Pathet Lao and the ordinary villager, the ordinary Laotian villager?

Lieutenant DENGLER. Mr. Chairman, it seems there is an internal war between the Laotian soldiers and the villagers. I will have to say that the villagers themselves treated me very well, according to their standards. When I traveled through a village and I lay down, maybe a village woman would come over and maybe she would put a stone underneath my head. I was never harmed by a villager. The Pathet Lao's soldiers would go into the village and tax those people. They would say, "You owe us so much rice, so much tapioca." The villagers right now have nothing to eat themselves. They are skin and bones themselves, sir. So they don't want to be taxed any more. But the soldiers keep coming back. The people keep asking the soldiers, "When will this war be over?"—"Why don't you stay away and leave us alone?" So the people are generally good, the soldiers are the bad ones, sir.

Chairman RUSSELL. Senator Saltonstall.

Senator SALTONSTALL. Mr. Chairman, I join with you and others here in congratulating the lieutenant upon being here and upon the way he handled himself under very, very difficult conditions.

May I ask you in addition to what the chairman has said, how did they question you? Did they torture you or did they leave you physically free while they questioned you, and was it done through an interpreter?

Lieutenant DENGLER. Senator, the only thing they wanted me to do was to sign that statement. First of all, the official approached me in a nice way. He let me have the piece of paper and said, "Sign it." I would not sign it. He came up to me from the rear and started hitting me with his fist on the ear. Then he went into the bush and got some sticks and started beating me up a little bit, and at one time I passed out. Later on I passed out again a couple of times. The next morning they brought a water buffalo and they tied my hands together and my legs together and then they tied me behind this water buffalo. It dragged me 4 or 5 hours through the bush. Then they brought a piece of paper again and held down a pen and said "Sign it." I did not. So they continued doing this for 2 days. I would not sign it. Well, maybe finally they realized that I just would not sign it so they just kind of knocked it off and let me go on my way to the prison camp, sir.

Senator SALTONSTALL. Did they starve you or did they give you some food?

Lieutenant DENGLER. Sir, during this initial travel in February when I was shot down, I was fed well, according to their standards. I got one handful of rice during the day and sometimes some leaves. In fact, there were a couple of times I got hot water in February or March. But this deteriorated in April, May, June. The food got

so scarce even for themselves that when they had only a little themselves, half a handful, then we either got a little ball or nothing. So this is the reason why we had to break out because it was either a matter of escaping or starving to death there, sir.

Senator SALTONSTALL. Did you have an opportunity, if you can tell us, to talk to any of your comrades during the time they held you, or were you isolated?

Lieutenant DENGLER. Senator, initially I was in isolation, but then I was with the other prisoners and we were able to talk together. Just to keep up our morale we would hold church services, "Reverend Dengler" and "Reverend So and So" on Sundays. One of us talked about a movie on Mondays and Wednesdays and, as I mentioned, Lt. Duane Martin, he was a history major, and especially since I am interested in American history, spoke about George Washington and other leaders of the United States.

Once we were able to make a chess set out of bamboo, and we played some chess. Those are the things that kept us going—hoping for home, thinking about food, planning about restaurants. We had a lot of dreams, sir.

Senator SALTONSTALL. Well, Mr. Chairman, I have no more questions at the present time. I congratulate you, Lieutenant. I am very happy to see you here.

Lieutenant DENGLER. Thank you, Senator.

Chairman RUSSELL. Senator Symington.

Senator SYMINGTON. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

I am very proud of you, Lieutenant. I know all Americans are. I have no questions at this time.

Lieutenant DENGLER. Thank you, sir.

Chairman RUSSELL. Senator Ervin.

Senator ERVIN. I was mostly impressed by your statement that freedom was the most precious thing which can be taken away from anyone. Someone said a long time ago that eternal vigilance is the price of liberty, and we not only have to fight sometimes on the battlefield for liberty but we have to fight in the legislative Halls for the preservation of liberty because there are so many men of the best intentions who are so impatient to solve problems that they advocate the passage of laws which would rob the American people of their liberties.

So I hope you continue your fight for freedom as long as you are in the service, and when you retire from service and become a civilian I hope you will continue as a civilian, because nothing more true was ever said than the statement you made awhile ago, that freedom is the most precious thing which can be taken from anyone.

I have no questions because I have read your statement, and I marvel at any human being who could survive the ordeals which you had to undergo.

Lieutenant DENGLER. Thank you, sir.

Chairman RUSSELL. Senator Smith.

Senator SMITH. Mr. Chairman, thank you.

Lieutenant, I like your statement on your appraisal of freedom and I hope you will repeat this over and over again while you are here with us. I, with the other members, am very happy to have you here.

During your service in Vietnam, did you experience any shortage of ammunition, supplies, or any form of support?

Lieutenant DENGLER. Senator, in any mission and every mission I went on, I had enough ammunition loaded aboard the aircraft to carry out any target assignments.

Senator SMITH. Thank you very much.

What was the reaction of our combat forces over there to the demonstrators back here calling for a pullout from Vietnam?

Lieutenant DENGLER. Senator, I am a pilot and I was aboard a carrier. We did not hear too much about them. During this time we heard very little about demonstrations. We were very active flying, and I did not hear too much, so I really don't know, Senator.

Senator SMITH. Can you express your own reaction or would you care to express your own reaction?

Lieutenant DENGLER. Senator, I am a pilot and a Navy officer. So I am a military man who takes orders. If they want me to go to the moon I would be on my way.

Senator SMITH. Well, we hope you won't go right away.

Lieutenant, what is your own appraisal of the determination of the Vietcong to continue fighting?

Lieutenant DENGLER. Senator, the Vietcong and the people, especially the Pathet Lao, are very ignorant, and they do as they are told by the North Vietnamese. So it seems if the North Vietnamese want to keep on going those people will keep on pushing. But other than this, I really don't know because I wasn't in contact with the people. I was mostly locked up in a hut.

Senator SMITH. Do you feel that the demonstrators have given them any encouragement to fight on or any belief that we will ultimately tire of the war and respond to the demands of the demonstrators and pull out?

Lieutenant DENGLER. I don't really know. The only thing I know, Senator, was that these Pathet Lao think that the United States is going to go broke because of the number of U.S. aircraft the Communists shoot down. That is what the North Vietnamese tell them. They also say Uncle Sam has come over there to get their gold, their tin, their rubber.

When you walk along in the woods you will see a poster and it will show an American, lean and mean, long trousers, whiskers, and his hat cocked. Maybe it will show that he just shot some women and now has a .45 at the head of a monk. This is what the people believe. They see this and they believe this, and they think that you are just a mean old "son of a gun."

Senator SMITH. Thank you very much, Mr. Chairman.

Again I would like to say that I hope you repeat over and over again your evaluation of freedom. I think it is very, very essential that the people everywhere know how you feel on coming back from the situation that you were in.

Lieutenant DENGLER. Thank you, Senator.

Chairman RUSSELL. Senator Cannon.

Senator CANNON. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Lieutenant, I, too, am very happy to see you today under much more pleasurable circumstances than you have been under in the past.

In your statement you referred to the fact that you were first captured by the Pathet Lao and later turned over to the North Vietnamese troops. How were you able to distinguish between the Pathet Lao and the North Vietnamese?

Lieutenant DENGLER. Senator, the Pathet Lao, as I indicated, are ignorant. They mostly wear loin cloths and sometimes carry a weapon, usually a machete, while the North Vietnamese speak a different language, they comb their hair, they brush their teeth, they have pressed uniforms. They have Russian weapons and they take good care of them. They have shoes.

When they travel through a village, they write down the time they get there and the time they leave. They are more organized and look it. They have white teeth while most Laotians chew the betel nut which turns their teeth and mouth red. The language also distinguishes them, sir.

Senator CANNON. The prison camp that you were taken to, was this in a North Vietnamese compound or was it just an isolated camp?

Lieutenant DENGLER. Sir, I was in an isolated camp on the Vietnamese-Laotian border in Laos, sir.

Senator CANNON. And you say you were there with other prisoners. I believe in one instance you said there were six prisoners. Were these American prisoners?

Lieutenant DENGLER. Sir, I am sure you agree with me that since lives of other prisoners are involved I should not talk about it here, sir. In a closed session I would be more than happy to discuss it with you, sir.

Senator CANNON. I certainly would not want you to discuss anything here that might endanger the lives of others. I would not want to get into the specifics of that at all.

Now, as far as you know, you were the only one to successfully escape and get back into American hands; is that correct?

Lieutenant DENGLER. Sir, I have not heard about anyone else. I can't say if I am the only one, sir.

Senator CANNON. Thank you very much, Lieutenant.

I think the statement that you have made and your belief in democracy and freedom is going to be great for this country, and it is one that many of our countrymen could well heed.

Lieutenant DENGLER. Thank you, Senator.

Chairman RUSSELL. Senator Young.

Senator YOUNG. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Lieutenant, you have manifested outstanding bravery and ingenuity, and I am proud to be here and to listen to your narration. I am so glad that you made your escape and you are back with us. I have no questions to ask you, except I congratulate you.

Lieutenant DENGLER. It is good to be home, sir.

Chairman RUSSELL. Senator Thurmond.

Senator THURMOND. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Lieutenant, I want to take this opportunity to congratulate you for your loyalty to the United States and for what it stands. I want to congratulate you for the principles of the freedom for which you stood when you were captured as a prisoner and during the fighting preceding that.

I want to congratulate you for your desire to win victory over there and the sacrifices that you underwent in order to do this.

I want to congratulate you for your courage and your fortitude and your foresight, keeping ever in mind the word "freedom" which, I think, is the most precious word in the English language next to "God."

The sacrifices, the hardship and the punishment that you underwent are truly characteristic of a real man, a real hero, one who is willing to fight for principles, one who believes in freedom and one who is willing to sacrifice and fight for it.

In this country today we have our young people, so many of them, being misled into believing that we need to convert our form of government to a godless dictatorship possibly, which ultimately could end up under communism.

You have enjoyed the freedom in the United States, you have seen the lack of freedom over there as a prisoner and in Vietnam, in being there with the Vietcong and the Pathet Lao.

I am just wondering what message you would have for the young people of this country, comparing America with its freedom to the situation over there where there is no freedom?

Lieutenant DENGLER. Senator, as you stated, the people have to realize what freedom is, what they have. Just to walk down the street, just to go and buy what you want. Before it seemed so natural, but once that is taken away from you, you miss it and you want it back. There is no price on it, and you are determined to get it back. All of my fellow prisoners felt that way. I am sure all the Americans over there fighting have the same feeling. It is about freedom that the young generation should know; they should know what it means and that it is something they should not give up, and if it means even to fight for it, sir.

Senator THURMOND. And if it means to fight for it, it is your opinion that they would be following the part of wisdom to do so, would they not?

Lieutenant DENGLER. Yes, sir; and our Government thinks so, too.

Senator THURMOND. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Chairman RUSSELL. Senator Byrd.

Senator BYRD of Virginia. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Lieutenant, first, I would like to echo what has been said by other members of this committee, that you are not only a great credit to this United States, that you are so loyal to, but I think you are a great credit to that great native country of yours.

I, too, am pleased that you put such accent on freedom, you, who have experienced the lack of freedom and all that it entails.

May I ask you just two brief questions?

You mentioned that you were not harmed by the villagers. Were you in a position to judge whether the villagers are sympathetic or apathetic toward the struggle which is now taking place in Vietnam?

Lieutenant DENGLER. Senator, the villagers don't want to have anything to do with war. It seems that they just want to go out in the fields and to be able to live from day to day. As I indicated, no harm was done toward me by villagers. I was merely on exhibit. I would walk into a village and 200 or 300 villagers standing around. Nobody says a word. Everybody just looks, sir.

Senator BYRD of Virginia. There was no indication on the part of the villagers that they would be interested in continuing the struggle that is taking place?

Lieutenant DENGLER. That is correct, sir.

Senator BYRD of Virginia. You mentioned that most of the weapons were Russian weapons. Did you have any indication of Chinese participation in any way in the struggle taking place?

Lieutenant DENGLER. No, Mr. Senator. I saw Russian trucks and I saw Russian weapons and I saw United States weapons. I did not see any Chinese indication of anything, sir.

Senator BYRD of Virginia. Either in the way of equipment or personnel?

Lieutenant DENGLER., That is correct, sir.

Senator BYRD of Virginia. Thank you, Lieutenant.

Lieutenant DENGLER. Thank you, Senator.

Chairman RUSSELL. Mr. Dengler, you referred to the fact that the Laotians and the North Vietnamese spoke different languages. Did they seem to understand each other generally? Were they bilingual, both of them?

Lieutenant DENGLER. Mr. Chairman, in Laos itself there are two or three different languages, and the North Vietnamese understand a couple of them, sometimes even three of them. They seem to understand the Pathet Lao better than the Pathet Lao understand them. They seemed to get along, sir.

Chairman RUSSELL. When you escaped you did not have any compass or any other equipment that would help you in ascertaining the direction, other than the stars and the moss on the trees, I suppose. When you were rescued did you find that you had been traveling in approximately the direction that you had intended to when you left, when you escaped?

Lieutenant DENGLER. No, Mr. Chairman. You don't have even the stars. You don't have the sun. It is just one green solid canopy. A companion 5 feet away is completely hidden by the jungle. It is so thick. Actually when I traveled, I traveled a long curve, and I thought I was going west. I wanted to reach a large river so I could float down it because at the time I was very weak. Actually I had to start learning to walk again, sir. I had not walked much during my 6 months in prison. So without a compass and unable to walk any distance everything was very difficult. Sometimes in a clearing I could see the direction of the moving clouds. The clouds are coming from the southwest because it was the monsoon. That was about the only indication I had of the direction I was going, sir.

Chairman RUSSELL. So you found you were traveling in a circle?

Lieutenant DENGLER. Moving in a big curve, sir.

Chairman RUSSELL. Of course, it is true that a hunter often gets lost in the woods here. I have traveled many miles in a circle myself when I was out deer hunting and hunting wild turkey. But I suppose your circle was much larger than any I have been in, so you would eventually have wound up where you started if you were not rescued.

Lieutenant DENGLER. No, sir; not quite. I had circled far enough so I would have avoided from where I started by about 20 miles, sir. I really don't know what would have happened. I am sure glad that man saw me from up there and took me out.

Chairman RUSSELL. Now, you said that, generally speaking, as long as the villagers knew who you were and your condition and circumstances they were kind to you.

Lieutenant DENGLER. The villagers were very kind; yes, sir.

Chairman RUSSELL. Yet a villager killed your companion. I suppose he thought he was some intruder or someone who was trying to rob them or something. He killed Captain Martin with a machete.

Lieutenant DENGLER. Mr. Chairman, the only explanation I could give on that part is that initially I was traveling with guards. The

villagers maybe thought, "Well, they have him safely captured." But now we were traveling alone and maybe were dangerous. I really don't know just what happened. All of a sudden this fellow was yelling, "Americado, Americado," and coming out of the bush, and it just happened like this.

Chairman RUSSELL. Was that at night or in the daytime?

Lieutenant DENGLER. That was during the daytime, sir.

Chairman RUSSELL. He knew you were an American?

Lieutenant DENGLER. Yes, sir; especially they recognize one by the beard, by our size. We are much taller than they are; our clothing is different. It is not hard to distinguish us, sir.

Chairman RUSSELL. I always understood these were very superstitious people?

Lieutenant DENGLER. That is correct, sir.

Chairman RUSSELL. Did you have any amulet or luck piece of any kind with you? I would like to find out what it was if you did. You were extremely lucky to be picked up in just one of a million chances.

Lieutenant DENGLER. Yes, sir. In those last days I really prayed a lot. It even seemed more than a miracle to me, because I was down in a little gully. There was a wall going up sharply like this and like this. There were only 200 feet of space for that pilot to see me. He just flew over me, made a left turn, and a left wing down so he had 1 or 2 seconds to spot me. But he did spot me as I waved. I did not even remember that I had laid out an SOS. When he lifted me up later on in the helicopter, he lifted me to freedom. I saw this Air Force crewman standing in the doorway. He had American pants on, and I grabbed them and I said, "I am going where you are going." I did not let go until we hit Da Nang. That is the way it was, sir.

Chairman RUSSELL. Your appearance today is very different from that of the picture we saw originally when you were rescued.

How large was this stream that you were traveling on on this raft?

Lieutenant DENGLER. Mr. Chairman, the stream varied. It sometimes was 10 feet wide, and coming into a lower part, it became 100, 200 feet wide.

Now, we thought we had already reached a point where we had been far enough out of the highland, so we could use a raft. We would get on it at night and start floating out, but it surprised us when the stream was not large enough. We went over a 150- or 200-foot waterfall just hanging on, and this was at night. So the streams vary and you have to be quite a ways downstream to have clear enough water to ride a raft.

Chairman RUSSELL. This fisherman that you bumped into, was he in a boat or was he fishing, standing in the water?

Lieutenant DENGLER. Mr. Chairman, those people when the moon comes out, fish in the water often standing in the rapids. That is where the trout are, and they do really good fishing especially at night. This native was standing in the water waist high, sir.

Chairman RUSSELL. Did he shout anything when you hit him?

Lieutenant DENGLER. Well, he shouted before we hit him. He saw us coming. He kept shouting and yelling and, well, we didn't respond. I didn't know what he was saying. All of a sudden, I saw him making tracks. This is when we got off the raft and made it the other way, and started traveling on foot through the bush again, sir.

Chairman RUSSELL. So, he moved on out of the way when he saw who you were.

Lieutenant DENGLER. Well, we were floating sideways on the raft at that time. We had come over the rapids, swinging around, and we hit him with the rear end of the raft.

Chairman RUSSELL. Where did you get the material to make the raft?

Lieutenant DENGLER. Sir, to make a raft, banana trees are excellent floaters. With about 10 banana trees, you can make an excellent raft. You take some sticks and the banana tree is soft enough you can stick them through. But that particular raft we had found on the river bank and we utilized that raft, sir.

Chairman RUSSELL. So you just borrowed that raft?

Lieutenant DENGLER. That is correct, sir.

Chairman RUSSELL. Senator Saltonstall.

Senator SALTONSTALL. Just one question, Lieutenant. Did you have an opportunity to get any reaction as to the morale and as to the eagerness of the people who were your captors concerning the war, concerning our efforts, and anything of that character?

Lieutenant DENGLER. No, Mr. Senator. After I was put in prison, I was in a hut with four walls. The only time we did see the guards was when they came in and threw us some leaves in our huts. Morale-wise, I can only say when the food got scarce, their morale went down and they took it out on us, sir.

Senator SALTONSTALL. So that really from your point of view as a captive, you were entirely concerned with getting free and with getting food, and so on, and you didn't get really any reaction from the people who were your captors.

Lieutenant DENGLER. That is correct, Mr. Senator.

Senator SALTONSTALL. That is all.

Chairman RUSSELL. Senator Symington.

Senator SYMINGTON. You made a wonderfully brave effort. When you saw you probably were going to be captured, you buried a lot of equipment, radio and so forth, which otherwise might have been of great help to you. Other pilots would normally obtain rescue much quicker, a better chance of being rescued than you had because you bravely buried your equipment; isn't that true?

Lieutenant DENGLER. Mr. Senator, the reason I buried my equipment was that I had a walkie-talkie radio, and I was under the impression that those people speak English. When I was shot down I crash landed that airplane, I crawled out of it and everything was turning around, and I had heard people yelling, and I wanted to get rid of that radio to protect our pilots. The radio could be used to trick them.

Senator SYMINGTON. I understood that and it is wonderful you did. On the other hand, if you had not heard those people perhaps you could have been rescued before being captured.

Lieutenant DENGLER. That is correct.

Senator SYMINGTON. Holding out some more hope to other pilots from the standpoint of the rescue mission, isn't that a fair statement?

Lieutenant DENGLER. Yes, sir. Next time I would hesitate because for the next 2 or 3 days I saw the rescue aircraft flying overhead. If I would have had a signaling device I could have been saved; yes, sir.

Senator SYMINGTON. That is what I was attempting to bring out. Thanks and again congratulations.

Chairman RUSSELL. Senator Ervin.

Senator ERVIN. When did you first meet Lieutenant Martin? Was that in the first prison camp you were taken to?

Lieutenant DENGLER. Yes, Mr. Senator.

Senator ERVIN. And you spoke of there being six other prisoners there. One of them included Lieutenant Martin?

Lieutenant DENGLER. One of them was Lieutenant Martin; yes, sir.

Senator ERVIN. You stated that some of these prisoners had been in the custody of the North Vietnamese for over 2 years. What nationality were they?

Lieutenant DENGLER. Sir, this is the question that I would rather not discuss, because of the lives of the other prisoners.

Senator ERVIN. That is perfectly all right, sir. I withdraw the question.

Now, after you got to the second prison camp you were confined in more than two prison camps altogether?

Lieutenant DENGLER. Mr. Senator, I was in only two prison camps, sir.

Senator ERVIN. When you got in the second camp, the prisoners made an agreement about escape, and you wanted for the monsoon to come, and the monsoon was late coming, wasn't it?

Lieutenant DENGLER. It sure was, sir. We wanted to get going in May, sir, and the big thing in the jungle is the water. Everybody thinks it is a steaming jungle. It is not. It is dry, and you need the water or you will dehydrate, and we had to wait for that water, sir.

Senator ERVIN. So, finally, when you escaped, while you spent about, I believe you spent 21 or 22 or 23 days before you were rescued altogether—

Lieutenant DENGLER. That is correct, sir; that is true.

Senator ERVIN. And you had to subsist on what little food you could find along the way, and that was mighty little.

Lieutenant DENGLER. Yes, sir.

Senator ERVIN. Lieutenant Martin contracted malaria and was very ill most of the journey, and you were sick, too.

Lieutenant DENGLER. Yes, sir. We were all sick, sir.

Senator ERVIN. And then he was mortally wounded when you reached this village in your wanderings, which you thought was deserted, but you suddenly discovered it was inhabited, and you were attacked, and he was mortally wounded by one of the villagers or some person, whether he was a villager or not.

Lieutenant DENGLER. That is correct, sir.

Senator ERVIN. I do not see how you survived the ordeal, but I am certainly glad you did.

Lieutenant DENGLER. Thank you, sir.

Chairman RUSSELL. Senator Smith.

Senator SMITH. I do not have any questions, Mr Chairman.

Chairman RUSSELL. Senator Cannon, anything further?

Senator CANNON. Yes, Mr. Chairman.

You mentioned it was a province official who tried to get you to sign the statement. Now, was this one of the Pathet Lao officials or was this a North Vietnamese person?

Lieutenant DENGLER. Sir, I think it was a Pathet Lao official, sir.

Senator CANNON. Apparently he was a province chief of that particular province; is that correct?

Lieutenant DENGLER. Mr. Senator, his aide told me that, in French, that he is the chief of the province.

Senator CANNON. And up until that time you had not been turned over to the North Vietnamese captors; is that correct?

Lieutenant DENGLER. Mr. Senator, during the travel from when I was captured to the prison, I escaped once. I climbed a hill or more like a mountain. When I did get back down they caught me drinking at a waterhole. It seemed to the Vietnamese that the Laotians couldn't handle that bad American, so they took over and marched me to the prison, sir.

Senator CANNON. But that was after they had tried to get you to sign the statement against your country.

Lieutenant DENGLER. That is correct, sir.

Senator CANNON. Thank you very much. That is all I have.

Chairman RUSSELL. Senator Young.

Senator YOUNG. Nothing further.

Chairman RUSSELL. Senator Thurmond.

Senator THURMOND. Nothing further, Mr. Chairman.

Chairman RUSSELL. Senator Byrd.

Senator BYRD of Virginia. Mr. Chairman, just one word. I would like to express the hope to your superiors, Lieutenant, that you will be able to get around the United States just as much as possible because I believe that you dramatize what so many young Americans need to give attention to today, and that is bravery, devotion to duty, and love of freedom. I hope you will get around these United States just as much as possible and come in contact as much as possible with our young men throughout the Nation.

Lieutenant DENGLER. Thank you, sir.

Chairman RUSSELL. You referred several times to the villages being deserted. Were there a great many of the villages where no one lived in them?

Lieutenant DENGLER. The villages, sir?

Chairman RUSSELL. Yes, those you saw as you were being taken under guard to the camp, as well as those you visited in search of food and for other reasons when you had escaped. I was impressed that there were several villages that no one lived in; apparently they were deserted.

Do you have any theory to account for that as to why no one was there?

Lieutenant DENGLER. No, sir; I really don't. I found that the villagers go into the bush because of the intense heat. Usually the village is in the open but they have huts alongside the heavy bush. That is where they go during the day. It seems like in the early morning or in the early evening, they go back to the village and tend their crops, sir. Otherwise, I wouldn't have any explanation for that, sir.

Chairman RUSSELL. Do they clear the jungle for some distance around the huts?

Lieutenant DENGLER. Mr. Chairman, it seems they clear just enough to put the huts in, sir. But where the village is, there is an opening definitely.

Chairman RUSSELL. What kind of roads or trails were you taken over while you were prisoner, or during the period when you escaped? Do they have any paved roads or are the roads dirt or hard surface?

Lieutenant DENGLER. Mr. Chairman, I traveled, I crossed three roads. None of them was hard surfaced. They are mud roads, and they are completely useless during a rainy season. But most of the traveling is done, I would say, 95 percent of the traveling is done, by narrow trails about a couple of feet wide.

Chairman RUSSELL. Did they ride animals there? Do they have any animals that they ride, like donkeys in north Africa?

Lieutenant DENGLER. Sir, during my escape I saw tigers, elephants, bears, monkeys, snakes. You name it; it is there, sir, just about everything, Mr. Chairman.

Chairman RUSSELL. It does not sound to me as though they would be very satisfactory transport, though.

I remember the story about the man who went for a ride on the tiger and wound up on the inside—or the girl, I believe it was.

Lieutenant DENGLER. Excuse me, sir—

Chairman RUSSELL. But did they have any animals they used to ride?

Lieutenant DENGLER. No, sir; no, sir; not at all, Mr. Chairman. I never even did see a horse, and I never saw anyone on a water buffalo. They do all traveling by foot, sir.

Chairman RUSSELL. That was your first mission, wasn't it?

Lieutenant DENGLER. It was my first mission in that part of the country, sir.

Chairman RUSSELL. In that part of the country. Was it your first mission in the war?

Lieutenant DENGLER. Excuse me, sir?

Chairman RUSSELL. Was it your first mission to make an armed attack, to carry out an attack?

Lieutenant DENGLER. No, sir. I had flown about 20 missions off USS *Ranger* at "Dixie Station" into South Vietnam, sir.

Chairman RUSSELL. Any further questions of Mr. Dengler?

Lieutenant Dengler, on behalf of the committee, I wish to express our appreciation to you for coming here and permitting us to see you and to talk to you and to get your viewpoint on matters, even though your opportunities to observe were somewhat limited and circumscribed during practically all of the time that you were in that part of the world.

We all hope and pray that some day mankind will abandon the folly of war and we will have permanent peace, but up until this good hour, and in the foreseeable future, force and might are still going to play a tremendous part in the affairs of men. It will be absolutely necessary that we maintain and preserve our freedoms.

I hope that your approach to this very terrifying and grueling experience will hearten many of those who apparently are willing to surrender without even an effort in this country. I am not referring now just to the war in southeast Asia but I am talking about armaments generally. If the day ever comes when we unilaterally disarm in this world, why, this beautiful freedom which you have described

so well, and which was echoed by many members of this committee, will vanish like mists in the morning sun.

We are delighted to see you here, and we are delighted to see you looking so healthy. I am sure I voice the sentiment of the entire committee when I say we hope this luck of yours will continue to hold out for some time. [Applause.]

Lieutenant DENGLER. Thank you.

Chairman RUSSELL. There was this question of your fiance. How soon is that going to be completed?

Lieutenant DENGLER. There is that question again, sir. Sir, the Navy keeps me so busy I really do not know what is coming off, sir, so that may have to wait, sir.

Chairman RUSSELL. I see, Mr. Dengler, you are impressed by the U.S. Senate because I believe you told the newsmen in California that it wasn't any of his business when he asked you that same question.

Well, this terminates your hearing, sir, and we will excuse you now.

Lieutenant DENGLER. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

(Whereupon, at 11:30 o'clock a.m., the committee proceeded to other business.)





