PROPAGANDA AIM IS SEEN

Officials Emphasize North's Refusal to Allow Check on Claim of Humane Care

By NEIL SHEEILAN Special to The New York Times WASHINGTON, April 3-The

State Department expressed concern today that Noth Vietnam might be brainwashing American prisoners to obtain propaganda statements attacking United States policy ...

. Robert J. McCloskey, the. State Department spokesman. cited an account in the current; issue of Life magazine of a captured American pilot's appearance before foreign newsmen in Hanol

The department, Mr. McCloskey said, is "concerned at recent indications that North Vietnam may be using mental or physical pressure on American prisoners, American priscan prisoners of war, to obtain confessions or statements critical of United States policy in.

Victnam." The article in Life, by Lee Lockwood, a free-lance American photographer who visited North Victnam for four weeks,. describes the exhibition in Hanoi on March 6 of Licut, Comdr. Richard A. Stratton, a Navy pilot who was shot down in

Repeated' Hanol Assurances The article said the Navy man 'looked straight ahead, but he wasn't really looking - his eyes never seemed to focushe just wasn't there," "He was "like a robot," Mr. Lockwood, wrote, adding: "when they saidsomething to him he acted; if they said nothing, he did nothing."

North Victnam in January.

North Victnam, Mr. Cleskey, gald, "has given repeated assurances that it treats prisoners

"However," he said, "It has refused to permit the International Committee of the Red Cross or any other neutral observers to visit the prisoners,

onventions. "In the absence of such independent verifications, "Ivorth Victnam's professions of human treatment cannot be ac-

which is required by the Geneva

U.S. Plca to Red Cross

Mr. McCloskey contended that the United States and South Vietnam were treating North Vietnamese soldiers captured in the fighting in the South in accordance with the regulations of the 1949 Geneva convention on prisoners of war. Representatives of the International Committee, he said, frequently visit prison camps. Mr. McCloskey said that in recent weeks the United States had asked the International Committee, which sits in Geneva, to express American concern to the North Victnamese authorities over indications hat prisoners were being sub-

niques. Washington has also called. on the International Committee to ask North-Vietnam again to allow the Red Cross or some neutral power to inspect pris-1 on camps and to give the prisoners mail and parcels containing medicine and food. Such actions are provided in the Geneva convention. No response has

jected to brainwashing tech-

been received. According to Mr. Lockwood, Commander Stratton, dressed in striped prison pajamas and sandals, read a five-page "confession" over a microphone from behind a curtain while foreign newsmen listened. Copies of the statement were given

to the newsmen. Mr. McCloskey noted that Japanese television film shown in this country in mid-March confirmed Mr. Lockwood's account of Commander Stratton's demeanor in response to comimands.

Prisoner Total Unclear -

There are now about 380 American prisoners in North Victnam. Definitive figures cannot be obtained because the North Victnamese refuse to provide the Red Cross with lists. Of the total 128 have been confirmed by one means or another as being in North Victnamesé caplivity. Four are marines, 63 are Air Force men and 61 are Navy personnel Fifty other men, all of the Air Force, are believed to have been captured and 204 men are listed as missing in action and possibly captured.

State Department officials sald there had been a number of other indications besides the

account in Life that American prisoners were being subjected to brainwashing.

In May 1966, they said Cmdr. Jeremish A. Danton Jr. a Navy pilot, was exhibited be-fore Japanese television cameramen in Hanol, Cmdr. Denton confessed din the manner of a man who was not himself any more," the officials said, to crimes and made statements critical of American policy.

Since then propaganda statements attributed to 20 other prisoners have been read over the Hanol radio or distributed through Communist press media. In the statemetns, all marked by a stilted language, war crimes and denounced the United States' involvement in

Last July a number of Amerlean prisoners were paraded through the streets of Hanol.

Some Appeared Normal

Officials also note that on the dozen or so occasions when the North Victnamese have allowed Communist or left-wing journalists to interview prisoners, the captured Americans acted reasonably normal, did not make propaganda state-ments and praised their cap-

No foreigners have been allowed to interview prisoners in their camps.

Officials believe that the North Vietnamese are treating normally a small number of prisoners whose will they feel they cannot break while subjecting the majority to brainwashing tactics.

> 'He Just Wasn't There' By PETER GROSE

"He looked straight ahead, but he wasn't really lookinghis eyes never seemed to focus -he just wasn't there. It was like a robot-when they said 'something to him, he acted; if they said nothing, he did noth-

That was how an American photographer, Lee Lockwood, described Licut, Comdr. Richard A. Stratton, an American prisoner of war in North Victnam. who was presented along with his recorded "confession" at a news conference in Hanoi last

Mr. Lockwood attended the conference during a visit to North Victnam on assignment for Life magazine. His pictures and accounts are published in Life's April 7 issue, out today.

The American officer ap-

peared before assembled newsmen and diplomats for only about four minutes, Mr. Lockwood said in a telephone interview, after a recording of his 2.000-word statement had been played. Stiffly and awkwardly during those minutes, Commander Stratton bowed slowly to his right and to his left-This head reaching down almost to his thighs." Mr. Lockwood said—then, on a quick com-mand from his North Victnamese captors, he turned and withdrew from the room.

He said nothing, nor were any of the observers able to catch

Mr. Lockwood and the Hanol correspondent of Agence France-Presse, Jacques Moalic, were the only Western newsmen attending the news conference, held March 6. There were also]

lew-men and diplomats it the Swict Union, Poland, Co and other Communist countri in attendance.

Brightening Experience

"A frightening experience muttered one Frenchman as th group left the room, according to Mr. Lockwood.

"Cubans, Poles-all the no: Victnamese who saw it c pressed their dismay." Lockwood added, "I told son Victnamese officials the nex day that this would be the worst possible kind of display, as far as American public opinion was concerned."

"Some Vietnamese newsnien denied that Stratton and been given any orders as he stood there," he said, "but several of us heard it quite clearly—a few sharp words from the officer. then the prisoner went into this robot-like bowing."

Mr. Lockwood, a free-lance photographer who works with the Black Star picture agency, spent four weeks in North Vicinam. He obtained his visa through the North Victnamese Embassy in Havana in January, having applied for it last May. Speaking by telephone in New York, Mr. Lockwood gave this description of the news conference:

"We had one day's notice." They took us to a one-story building in Hanol - it was an old social club of some kind which was now being used as a military headquarters.

"The conference was held in long room with French doors looking out into a courtrard. There were three army officers of the Victnamese War Crimes Commission sitting at a table at the head of the room, and on their left was a curtained door way. In front of the table was loudspeaker. Til.
"After some preliminaries loudspeaker.

one of the officers announced, 'Now we will hear the confession of a United States prisoner.' All the photographers moved over to focus on the doorway, but they told us to go back to our places — we would hear the statement over the loudspeaker before seeing the

Five Typewritten Pages

rison**cr."** . '

"I am Richard Allen Stratton, licutenant commander in the U.S. Navy attached to... U.S.S. Ticonderoga," the volce said over the loudspeaker. As the ecording was played, copies of lthe statement, covering five single-spaced typewritten pages. were distributed in English, French and Vietnamese.

"His voice sounded aleri, sincere and intelligent," Mr. Lockwood said, "There was not much expression in his reading, but this I put down to his training in military briefing-he. or itainly did not sound like a man without any personality.

"I expected to see a man matching that voice come through the curtain—I was not prepared to see the sort of man who ultimately appeared."

In the recorded statement, Commander Stratton described a series of missions undertaken from the Ticonderoga starting Nov. 14.

The second of December was to be an air-wing strike on the suburbs of Hanol" Commander Stration's statement said. 'This was an extremely important mission recessary to make the

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AMEDICAN TOWNS U.S. Fears Hanoi Is Brainu shing Prisoner
Continued From Page 1, Col. 8 The American officer ap-moved over to focus on practice before assembled news-doorway, but they told us to

Pilot Exhibited to News

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