P.S. to the NEWS
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PATRIOTS BETRAYED BY BUREAUCRATS

I wonder how many Americans were watching when the NBC TV Theater presented its docudrama about the barbaric treatment of U.S. prisoners of war by the North Vietnamese. "When Hell Was In Session" was the true story of the American aviators captured by the North Vietnamese, especially of the senior prisoner, Navy Commander Jeremiah A. Denton, whose fighter-bomber was shot down over North Vietnam on July 18, 1965.

It wasn't easy to watch the scenes of the Communist captors mistreating the bleeding and crippled Americans. Denton endured seven and a half years of being beaten, starved, and tortured to try to make him confess to "war guilt," and the television movie was realistically portrayed.

Denton was tortured seven days and six nights in a pitch black room, beaten regularly and brutally while he was in irons and handcuffed. He was forced to kneel on concrete floors for days until his knees swelled up like balloons. The prisoners were kept in filthy, bug-infested prisons which the Americans facetiously called the Hanoi Hilton, the Zoo, and Alcatraz.

Denton was given the torture known as "the stool." He was made to sit on a low stool with his arms handcuffed behind him for 20 days with no sleep. When he would start to doze, the guards would hit him under the nose -- one of the numerous torture techniques perfected by the Communists which causes intense pain without leaving visible marks afterwards.

When the prisoners were finally released in February 1973, they did not utter any criticism of our government for abandoning them for seven years. When Denton landed back on U.S. soil, he stepped up to the microphone and said, "God bless America."

Although our gallant POWs never complained, the TV movie is a powerful indictment of the men running our country from 1965 to 1973. How could our government have taken such brave Americans away from their families, and then abandoned them to suffer

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for seven years at the hands of the sadistic henchmen of a little fifth-rate country? Anyone seeing "When Hell Was In Session" would never want a son, brother, or husband to serve in combat for a government which refuses to protect its own men.

It is a humiliating disgrace that the United States, which in 1965 was the greatest military power the world had ever seen, was unable in nine years to defeat little North Vietnam. American troops never should have been sent into action in Vietnam. Former South Vietnam President Thieu recently said that he would have had a better chance of winning if U.S. troops had stayed away and sent only weapons to South Vietnam.

Once U.S. troops were involved, however, the war should have lasted no more than six months. North Vietnam received nearly all its supplies from ships unloaded at the port of Haiphong. If our government had announced that any ships coming to Haiphong would be sunk, war supplies and weapons would have been cut off within a month.

None of our warships or planes ever interfered with the unloading of weapons and supplies for our enemies. The harbor itself is unusable without the daily operation of a dredge; but that target was also off limits to U.S. attack.

Those who jimmied a door and prowled around a political headquarters at Watergate, and their superiors, have been severely punished and disgraced. But those who caused 210,000 casualties among our gallant servicemen, and forced them to fight a losing nine-year war in Southeast Asia, have been promoted instead of punished.

At the beginning of the Vietnam War, the Secretary of Defense was Robert S. McNamara, and his chief lieutenants were Deputy Defense Secretary Cyrus Vance and Air Force Secretary Harold Brown. The latter two are directing our foreign and defense policies today, and McNamara has spent more than eleven years (since 1968) in the lucrative, prestigious post of president of the World Bank.

How much longer can our nation endure when the men responsible for the Vietnam tragedy and the betrayal of our bravest servicemen are rewarded and retained in high office? Who will be the next victims of such folly?

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