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[Text] Hanoi, July 11 (AFP)-Vietnamese officers who said they worked closely with collaborator Robert Garwood during the 1970s accused him Sunday of betraying their friendship by claiming he saw American prisoners here after the war.

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The three retired colonels were made available to reporters after Garwood concluded a four-day visit to Vietnam with U.S. Senator Bob Smith, who said the results of the trip had boosted Garwood's credibility as a witness.

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The officers took the opposite tack, saying that Garwood had no credibility since he maintained that he was a prisoner of war (POW) until he left Vietnam in 1979, when they said he lived freely, contributed to propaganda work and had a Vietnamese fiancée.

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Colonel Nguyen Thai, chief of enemy prosletyzing for the Fifth military region, said Marine Corps private Garwood was captured in 1965 and was chosen for early release along with several other U.S. prisoners in 1967.

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'We tried to persuade him to **return** to U.S. Army, but he didn't agree. After his capture, he realized that the Vietnamese people and government were carrying on a policy of democracy and equality ... that he thought didn't exist in America,' Thai said.

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The retired colonel said Garwood became a salaried cadre for the Vietnamese People's Army, and lived in or near Hanoi from 1970 until he asked to go home in 1979.

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'We were ordered by upper levels that he was to be accepted into Vietnamese society, and we were ready to treat him as an associate of the Vietnamese people and not as an enemy. He was treated as a friend, who could be free,' Thai said.

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Garwood told AFP after arriving here that he had been a prisoner until 1979, though he said he had more freedom of **movement** than other POWs. He also said he saw at least 30 to 40 apparent American POWs in Vietnam after the war.

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'When we released him we hoped that he would enjoy happy life with his family in the United States. We hoped he would not be punished by the U.S. Government. We sought to do everything to protect him,' Thai said.

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'But now he has come back with a bad and impolite attitude, saying he had been 14 years in prison, captured and tortured, but this is completely fabricated.'

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Colonel Doan Hanh, commander of the unit that administered re-education camps, produced a black-and-white photo of Garwood and an Asian man identified as his roommate, a Thai pilot who defected to Vietnam, standing in front of the Ho Chi Minh Mausoleum in Hanoi before 1975.

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No other Vietnamese documents concerning Garwood were produced, however.

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Garwood, who was court-martialled for collaboration after he **returned** home, said upon arrival here that the Vietnamese would try to discredit him by saying he was their friend, but he stressed: 'I was their enemy then, and I'm their enemy now.'

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Smith said Garwood had boosted his credibility by

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leading the senator's delegation to an island in remote Yen Bai Province where he said he saw apparent American prisoners held in two buildings in 1977.

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But Vietnamese officials said the two buildings Smith's team found on the island were constructed in 1987.

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