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HEADLINE: For U.S Olympians, Bitterness Lingers

BODY: For more than 400 American athletes kept out of the Olympics by the U.S. boycott, there were medals, gifts, parties, a dinner at the White House and praise from President Carter.

But to most of the athletes, the free week in Washington in late July was a poor substitute for a trip to Moscow and a chance at Olympic medals.

Bitterness was evident. Some refused to get into a receiving line to shake hands with the President, who initiated the boycott. There were complaints that athletes had been used for political ends. "I'm here to make sure this never happens again," said buttons worn by several of the guests.

Carter got no applause when he told his visitors that the boycott "was a vital and indispensable reaction to the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan" and praised them for having done "as much as any other group of people anywhere on earth to hold high the banner of liberty and peace."

The reaction of many was expressed in a statement by a group of track athletes: "While we strongly deplore overt, aggressive acts by one nation against another, we question whether the boycott of the Olympic Games is the best means available to assist the cause of world peace."

During the festivities, which cost the U.S. Olympic Committee \$950,000, those who qualified for the Olympic team were given gold-plated medals issued by Congress, along with the cowboy clothes and boots they would have worn to Moscow.

Amid the mourning for the lost Olympics of 1980 came a ray of hope for the 1984 games, scheduled for Los Angeles. The government granted the U.S. Olympic Committee 10 million dollars, the first federal funds it ever received. It will help make up for public contributions lost in the boycott.