

Last Known POW Is Freed

From News Dispatches

CLARK AIR BASE, Philippines, Sept. 18—Emmet James Kay, the last known U.S. prisoner of war in Indochina, was freed by Laotian Communist forces today after 16 months of captivity.

On his arrival here after a day-long trip from the Communist-controlled section of northern Laos, the lanky commercial pilot for Continental Air Services, a charter airline, told greeters that he knew of no other Americans in custody.

[In Washington, President Ford said in a statement that Kay's release "marks a major positive step" in carrying out the Vientiane accord that ended the Laotian war last year. The United States hopes, he said, that "it will be followed by other positive steps to achieve peace and reconciliation in Laos."

[Mr. Ford added, however, "At the same time, I remain concerned about the many Americans still unaccounted for in Southeast Asia," and he called on North Vietnam to comply with the Paris agreement on Vietnam by allowing U.S. teams to search for graves and bodies.]

Kay, 47, was the first prisoner released in a long-delayed POW exchange between the U.S.-backed Vientiane government and the pro-Communist

Pathet Lao. The two sides, now joined in a coalition government, are to exchange 350 Laotian, Vietnamese and Thai prisoners starting Thursday.

Kay landed at this air base in the Philippines shortly after sunset at the end of a two-hour flight from Thailand.

It was Kay's third flight for

the day, which started with his release at Sam Neua in the Communist's mountain stronghold of northern Laos.

[Kay, interviewed on his release in Sam Neua by Agence France-Presse, was critical of the United States for its

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United Press International

Pilot Emmet Kay waves to greeters on his arrival in the Philippines after release by Communist forces.

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"unjustifiable intervention" in Indochina over the past 20 years. He went on to say, "I transported lots of arms and also bombs. I was an indirect accomplice in assassinations. You could even say that I was directly guilty of assassinations because a lot of Laotians are dead because of that—that meaning American dollars." He said he received between \$2,000 and \$3,500 a month from Continental.]

After greeting her husband in Vientiane, the Laotian capital, Kay's wife, Florence, declared, "He looks fine."

Kay, who is from Hawaii, said he had lost 20 pounds in captivity but was "treated very, very well" by his captors after his small plane made a forced landing in northern Laos on May 7, 1973.

Maurice Galnick, political-military officer of the U.S. embassy in Vientiane, who escorted Kay and his wife, said an Air Force flight surgeon checked Kay on the trip to the Philippines and said he looked fit.

Regarding the possibility of other American prisoners, Galnick said Kay had been told by his Pathet Lao captors that when they found the sites of other plane crashes, they had buried the bodies and had taken no prisoners.