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'Reeducation' for Saigon's Ex-Officers

By Daniel De Luce

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DANANG, May 2—A spokesman for South Vietnam's new government said 103,000 enlisted men and noncommissioned officers who were taken prisoner in the Danang area in March have been released to return to their homes.

The spokesman for the Revolutionary Government said 6,000 officers, ranging in rank from lieutenants to the major general commanding the Army of the Republic of Vietnam's 4th Corps, were also captured, and are still being held "for reeducation."

The new government allowed me and a CBS television crew to visit one of the "reeducation camps" for the officers at Dienban, about 20 miles south of here.

The camp consisted of a group of old army barracks surrounded by a dilapidated barbed-wire fence. A large part of the fence consisted of only two strands of widely separated wire.

The camp's commander, in army greens without any insignia of rank, said nearly 900 former South Vietnamese officers were in the camp, and their reeducation course would start the next day.

The inmates were wearing civilian clothes usually shirts, slacks and sandals. Some lounged in their bunkrooms or outside. Others were cooking or washing up mess kits. A small cloth movie screen fluttered between two poles in front of the administration building. Some inmates wore wrist watches.

In the middle of a dusty, untilled field in front of the camp stood a shed where numerous wives with children waited for their husbands to walk out from the camp and visit them. One former officer, in homemade trousers and a well-worn shirt, sat in the shade of the shed waiting for his family to arrive. He had been allowed to come out of the camp before the regular visiting hour, past the one armed guard at the gate.

The camp commander indicated that the duration of the reeducation program was still to be determined. Although most camp facilities were extremely simple, the public-address system was powerful. Announcements from strategically placed loudspeakers could

be heard everywhere in the camp.

The commander was asked if inmates completing the course could resume their military careers with the new government's army.

"They must have the aspiration to serve before they could be accepted," he said.

In brief question-and-answer sessions with the POWs in the presence of camp officials, all expressed a desire to return home as civilians.