

FRIDAY, OCTOBER 29, 1971

U.S. Doubts Foe Will Free Captives in Reciprocal Act

By BERNARD GWERTZMAN

Special to The New York Times

WASHINGTON, Oct. 28 — Administration officials said today that they had no reason to expect the release of any Americans by the enemy in return for the freeing this Sunday of nearly 3,000 Vietcong prisoners in South Vietnam.

Although the State Department issued a statement this morning welcoming the move by the Saigon Government and expressing hope that it would lead to reciprocity, officials in both the State and Defense departments said they were aware of no imminent release of any of the 40 Americans believed to be held prisoner in Southeast Asia.

Administration officials sought to quash speculation in some dispatches from Saigon suggesting that the release of the Vietcong to mark the inauguration of President Nguyen Van Thieu Sunday was possibly part of a secret deal.

This speculation was stirred by a report in The Chicago Tribune this morning that an Army hospital in Denver had been alerted to handle up to 200 United States prisoners.

Tribune Dispatch Denied

But the White House, the State Department and the Pentagon all issued prompt statements asserting that The Tribune report was inaccurate.

Jerry W. Friedheim, Pentagon spokesman said:

"There is absolutely nothing to The Chicago Tribune story. The Department of Defense has no information at all concerning any imminent release of U.S. prisoners. Neither Fitzsimons General Hospital [in Denver] nor any other hospital has been alerted in any manner for any imminent return of U.S. prisoners."

A spokesman for the Denver hospital said: "We have no knowledge here of any mass release of P.O.W.'s in Vietnam. There is a contingency plan presently under way which is preparing general hospitals for such a thing if it comes to pass."

"This is a staff study, but I feel it is nothing but wishful thinking," he said. "We are not planning to receive any-

thing more than the war casualties, which we have been getting all along."

Officials involved in prisoner matters expressed anger over speculation that some American might be released soon.

'Very Cruel Thing'

"It is a very cruel thing, because of the hopes it gives rise to among families of the prisoners," one aide said.

The Pentagon said that the Army last night called every next-of-kin family to tell them that The Tribune report was inaccurate.

State Department specialists on Vietnam said that all signs at present suggest that the North Vietnamese have not changed their attitude on prisoners. The Hanoi position has been that no American prisoner will be released until the United States accepts the Vietcong peace plan, which calls for complete withdrawal of American forces.

In Saigon, officials said that 618 Vietcong prisoners would be released outright and 2,320 others turned over to the chieu hoi or "open arms" program for "political rehabilitation" before being released.

Unilaterally, the Vietcong have released 24 Americans since 1965 and the North Vietnamese have released 9.

A spokesman at Hickham Air Force Base in Honolulu denied that increased air activity there in the last two days had anything to do with a return of prisoners from Vietnam.

He said the activity at the airfield was due to the movement of a squadron of Phantom jets from the 389th Tactical Squadron, which was being withdrawn from Vietnam to the United States.

There also was an unusual amount of helicopter activity at the nearby Tripler Hospital. But a spokesman said this was partly a civil defense exercise and was not related to prisoner return.

'Farce,' Vietcong Charge

Special to The New York Times

PARIS, Oct. 28 — The Communist delegations to the Vietnam peace talks refused today to accept the liberation of prisoners by the Saigon Government as a gesture of goodwill, and instead condemned it as a "farce."