

Hanoi Says It Will Free 3 Captured U.S. Flyers

Navy, AF Pilots Named

A.P. & U.P.

Tokyo

North Vietnam said today it will release three American pilots being held as prisoners of war.

It said they will be turned over to "A U.S. social organization animated with good will and a desire to bring about an early end to the U.S. war in Vietnam," but did not elaborate.

The names of the pilots broadcast by the Vietnam News Agency monitored in Tokyo were:

- Navy Lieutenant J.G. Markham Ligon Gartley, born May 16, 1944; service number 703644; pilot of a F-4B, captured on Aug. 17, 1968, in Nghe An.

- Navy Lieutenant J.G. Norris Alphonzo Charles, born Aug. 4, 1945; service number 755256; Pilot of an F-4B, captured on Dec. 30, 1971 in Ha Tinh.

- Air Force Major Edward Knight Elias born Jan. 16, 1938, service number 429649169 F. R.; of the 14th Tactical Reconnaissance, the 432nd Tactical Reconnaissance Wing, Udon air base in Thailand; pilot of an RF-4C, Captured on Apr. 20, 1972 in Quang Binh.

STATEMENT

The announcement was made in a North Vietnamese foreign ministry statement.

The statement said:

"Pursuant to the humane and lenient policy of the government of the Democratic Republic of Vietnam, the general political department of the Vietnam People's Army has decided to release, on the occasion of the National Day, Sept. 2, 1972," the

three American pilots captured in North Vietnam.

North Vietnam is celebrating the anniversary of the declaration of independence.

The statement, however, did not say when the pilots

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are expected to arrive in the United States or where they would be released.

The broadcast said it was the second such release of U.S. prisoners of war by the North Vietnamese. It said "a number of U.S. pilots captured in North Vietnam" was released in 1969.

The last American prisoners released by North Vietnam were a group of three on Aug. 5, 1969. They were Navy Lieutenant Robert F. Frishman of Santee, Calif., Air Force Captain. Wesley Ruble of Oroville, Calif., and Seaman Douglas Brent Hegdahl of Clark, S.D.

In Washington, a State Department spokesman said early today, that the only word of the release received by the U.S. government was from the Hanoi radio broadcast.

WAIT

U.S. officials were on the lookout for any communication from North Vietnam concerning the timing and method of release of the men.

One possibility speculated on here was that the prisoners would be put aboard a weekly plane that flies between Hanoi and Vientiane in neighboring Laos.

Some Washington sources said they believed the next flight from Hanoi was scheduled for today, but they said

they had no information whether the men would be on the plane.

Officials said the total number of known U.S. prisoners in North Vietnam as of mid-August was 413, with an additional 453 missing over the North.

KENNEDY

Earlier, the office of Senator Edward M. Kennedy (Dem-Mass.) said it had been advised in advance by confidential sources in Paris that the North Vietnamese would release several prisoners.

In Greenville, Me. last night, the father of Markham Gartley shouted, "That's my boy!" when told by telephone his son's name was on the list.

Gerald A. Gartley said he had not heard from his son since he received a letter written in June and delivered recently by former Attorney General Ramsey Clark, who visited Hanoi.

"It's too good to be true, just too good to be true," Gartley said.