

# A 'Dove' Escort For U.S. Fliers When Released

PARIS — (AP) — Two U.S. antiwar activists announced here yesterday they will personally escort home "in a matter of weeks" three U.S. airmen being released from North Vietnamese prisoner of war camps.

The activists are David Dellinger, a defendant in the Chicago Seven conspiracy trial now under appeal, and Cora Weiss of New York. They are cochairmen of the Committee of Liaison with Families of Servicemen held in North Vietnam.

Earlier in the day a North Vietnamese broadcast had said the three airmen would be handed over to a U.S. antiwar group. It did not say when or where.

#### Relatives Joyous

The broadcast identified the three as Navy Lieutenants junior grade, Markham Ligon Gartley, 28, of Dunedin, Fla., and Norris Alphonso Charles, 27, of San Diego and Edward Knight Elias, 34, an Air Force major from Valdosta, Ga.

Gartley was captured Aug. 17, 1968; Charles last Dec. 30, and Elias last April 20.

A White House spokesman said President Nixon was pleased by the Hanoi announcement, which came on the 27th anniversary of the founding of North Vietnam — a national holiday.

In the United States relatives of the three men were joyous, but Lieutenant Gartley's father, Gerald, who operates a lodge in Greenville, Maine, was cautious.

"When I shake his hand, I'll believe it," he said.



**MARKHAM GARTLEY**  
Of Florida



**LT. NORRIS CHARLES**  
One of trio



**MAJ. EDWARD ELIAS**  
Of Valdosta, Ga.

#### 'Prayers Answered'

Elias' wife Georgia said after returning from a hospital visit to her grandmother, "We have really been blessed by God. He's really taken care of us and answered our prayers."

In San Diego, a friend of Charles' wife Olga, said she was not taking calls but was "overjoyed" by the news.

Dellinger and Mrs. Weiss had conferred with the North Vietnamese and Viet Cong peace talks delegations

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in Paris before the announcement came from Hanoi.

Then they met with newsmen and reported that the prisoners would be handed over to their organization.

Mrs. Weiss said in an opening statement: "David Dellinger and I, as cochairmen of the Committee of Liaison, and representing also the People's Coalition for Peace and Justice, will escort the men home in a matter of weeks. We are needless to say honored and joyous for the men and their families."

"We hope the men will not be kidnaped by the military en route," Dellinger said, adding that the men were to be turned over directly to their families. Mrs. Weiss said that the current release is a "test of American intentions."

She said the North Vietnamese told her "no more men will be released if these men are used in further military acts against the Indochinese people or if they are used for propaganda attacks by the administration against the Indochinese people."

Mrs. Weiss claimed there

was U.S. government "interference" with nine servicemen previously released and that they were returned to military duties including training pilots to bomb North Vietnam and planning raids there.

"The net result of that behavior was the complete suspension of releases," she said.

Dellinger said the release date of the three men "could be delayed by the danger of floods in North Vietnam" interfering with transport possibilities.

"So if the Nixon Administration wants to find one sure way of delaying the release of these three prison-



**GOOD NEWS FOR A PAIR WHO WAITED**  
The wife and son of Major Edward K. Elias

—AP Photo

ers, it will be the continued bombing of the dikes."

#### 'In Good Health'

North Vietnam has charged that U.S. planes have been bombing dikes purposely to bring on flooding in populated areas. The United States has denied targeting dikes.

Mrs. Weiss said she understood the three men to be released are in "good health."

She added that the release of prisoners had not been possible for the past three years "because of the manner in which the U.S. government has handled previously released men."

On each of the three previous occasions in which prisoners were released to the peace movement, she said, "There has been interference en route."

"Each time the men have been returned to the military. In some cases, contrary to international law, they have been used to train new pilots to fly bombing raids over Indochina. Each time, men have made favorable remarks upon release and after a stint with the government, changed their tune and made a series of attacks upon the Vietnamese people," Mrs. Weiss said.

#### Figures on Prisoners

Radio Hanoi also alluded to activities of prisoners after their release.

"In the interests of the families of other captured U.S. pilots in North Vietnam," it said, "the U.S. government must stop using released prisoners to slander the DRVN" Democratic Republic of Vietnam.

Mrs. Weiss gave the following breakdown of prisoners as the North Vietnamese has informed them: Between 1964 and 1968, 368 prisoners were taken in North Vietnam. Nine had been released, 15 died of wounds within a "week or so" of being captured, and five died of "disease" in camps. Between last December and Aug. 23, 1972, "at least" 44 more pilots were captured, for a total of 383 prisoners officially held by the North Vietnamese.

She said discrepancies with U.S. official figures was the result of the Pentagon's listing of men confirmed dead as missing or prisoners.

#### Civilian Transport

The United States lists 539 men it says are known to have been captured and held by the North Vietnamese or Viet Cong in South Vietnam and Cambodia. It lists another 1123 prisoners as missing with many believed to be prisoners.

Mrs. Weiss and Dellinger stressed that the three men being released would be returned to the United States and their families by civilian transport.

Dellinger said he and Mrs. Weiss were notified in the United States Thursday that the North Vietnamese wished to discuss a prisoner matter with them. They were informed Friday morning in Paris of the release, he said.

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