

Women POW Kin In Hanoi Alerts

By Peter Arnett

HANOI — (AP) — The two American women who flew into Hanoi yesterday to escort home their captured loved ones were sent scurrying into roadside bunkers and concrete basements during four air raid alerts in their first five hours in North Vietnam.

"And I was silly enough to think that Washington would stop bombing while we were here," Olga Charles said.

She sat hunched in the basement of the Hoa Binh Hotel in downtown Hanoi as anti-aircraft guns spluttered into the sky.

Mrs. Charles, of San Diego is here to reunite with her husband, Navy Lt. Norris Charles, 27.

Hanoi also announced plans to release two other captured pilots, Air Force Maj. Edward K. Elias, 34, and Navy Lt. Mark L. Gartley, 28.

Minnie Lee Gartley, of Du-

nedin, Fla., is here to get her son Mark. Elias is from Valdosta, Ga. His father had planned to make the trip to Hanoi, then changed his mind.

North Vietnamese officials visited the women at the hotel and said plans were going ahead to release the three American prisoners, possibly today.

"We want to be certain you are healthy enough and psychologically ready to re-

ceive them," an official said.

"I'm as ready now as I'll ever be," Mrs. Charles said. Mrs. Gartley said, "Please let me see my son soon."

The officials said the released American prisoners could live with the visiting delegation at the hotel until they depart.

Mrs. Charles was about to step into a bath after an ar-

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duous day of traveling when sirens screamed outside her room and hotel staff members hurried her downstairs.

Gray-haired Mrs. Gartley, joined her on the stairway and both made their way through a labyrinth of back rooms and corridors to a concrete basement room.

This was the fourth time the American women and four peace activists escorting them had run for safety, and the strain was beginning to tell. The first time was at Gia Lam Airport at noon when a polite delegation of welcomers quietly escorted the arriving Americans to an underground bunker. The Vietnamese waited outside under trees.

No sounds of bombing or shooting could be heard then but an hour later on the two-mile drive through farming land to Hanoi, crowds of peasants waiting at a checkpoint began to run as anti-aircraft flak blossomed in the distance and explosions were heard.

The motorcade screeched to a stop and Mrs. Charles was half-dragged along the road by American anti-war activist David Dellinger to a bunker inside a small military post.

Dellinger cried out emotionally, "Is this Washington's answer to our visit?"



THE THREE PILOTS TO BE RELEASED BY NORTH VIETNAMESE
Markham L. Gartley, Norris A. Charles and Edward K. Elias

—AP Photo

But Mrs. Charles was smiling as she stepped inside the bunker and Mrs. Gartley was laughing.

Tension rose noticeably when sirens again blared as the motorcade approached a pothoon bridge upriver from Paul Doumer Bridge, which was hit by bombs two weeks ago and lay crumpled with its center spans down in the Red River.

North Vietnamese officials pushed the visiting Americans into roadside holes and said the bombing was taking place five or six miles away. Distant explosions could be heard.

By the time the visiting party arrived at the Hoa Binh Hotel, Mrs. Charles' flowery version of a Vietnamese traditional dress, the Aodai, was dirty and crumpled.

Ninety-degree heat and the dust and dirt of damp, mouldy bunkers had

streaked other Americans with grime.

A three-course lunch cooled nerves but no sooner had the visitors moved upstairs for a brief siesta than anti-aircraft began chattering again, and it was a race to the downstairs concrete basement.