

Plane Carrying Freed P.O.W.'s May Not Make Stopover in Laos

VIENTIANE, Laos, Sept. 20 (AP) — Evidence mounted today that a Soviet airliner expected to carry three released American prisoners of war out of North Vietnam Saturday night bypass Vientiane and make its first landing in Burma or India.

This would deny United States officials any opportunity to take control of the three men in the Laotian capital and get them away from the American antiwar activists who are escorting them.

The office here of Aeroflot, the Soviet airline, said the possibility that the plane would not land here had been raised by the information given to 22 passengers who were booked to board the plane in Vientiane, that they were being transferred to a "wait list." This indicates that it is uncertain that the plane will land as scheduled, the airline office said.

The Aeroflot office said the instructions had come from Soviet diplomatic sources but that no reason had been given. It also said that no passengers were scheduled to get off the Ilyushin turboprop airliner here.

United States sources say that American Embassy plans, if an aircraft carrying the three freed pilots should land here, would be to have officials go aboard if possible and advise the men that before returning to the United States they must undergo medical examinations. The three men would be informed that to refuse could

mean medical quarantine upon their arrival in the United States, the sources said.

The Aeroflot plane from Hanoi normally stops in Vientiane to refuel and let passengers on and off, but it has bypassed the Laotian capital on previous occasions.

When that happens, it then normally follows a route with stops at Calcutta, Bombay, Tashkent and Moscow. If the freed United States pilots and their escorts should stay aboard all the way, they conceivably could be beyond the reach of United States officials until after leaving Moscow.

The three freed men are Lieut. (j.g.) Mark L. Gartley, 28 years old, of Dunedin, Fla., and Lieut. (j.g.) Norris A. Charles, 27, of San Diego, Calif., both of the Navy, and Maj. Edward K. Elias, 34, of Valdosta, Ga., an Air Force officer. They are the first captured United States pilots to be released by North Vietnam since 1969.

The three pilots are to be escorted out of North Vietnam by Lieutenant Gartley's mother, Lieutenant Charles's wife and the four-member delegation of American antiwar activists that flew into North Vietnam last Saturday.