

# Hanoi Says Pilots Ask 'No Interference'

United Press

Tokyo

Hanoi announced yesterday that three American pilots released from prison in North Vietnam have asked United States authorities not to interfere with their trip home.

They made their request in separate cables to President Nixon and the Navy, according to the North Vietnam news agency.

In a broadcast monitored in Tokyo, the news agency said the prisoners assured their families and President Nixon of "their good health and good spirits and their

desired intention to be accompanied, without interference, by their civilian escorts, including Rev. William Sloan Coffin Jr., Richard Falk, David Dellinger and Cora Weiss."

The North Vietnamese news agency did not say when the three pilots might leave for home, but a cable sent by Air Force Major Edward K. Elias to his wife in Florida said "arrival possibly Thursday."

The three men, Major Elias, Navy Lieutenant

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(j.g.) Markham L. Gartley and Navy Lieutenant (j.g.) Norris A. Charles, were released to the peace group September 17 at a ceremony in downtown Hanoi. Also in the group to receive the prisoners was Charles' wife, Olga, and Gartley's mother, Minnie Lee Gartley.

In Washington, Defense Secretary Melvin R. Laird accused North Vietnam of making "propaganda tools" out of the pilots and their relatives who flew to Hanoi.

Laird, noting that North Vietnamese officials had promised three weeks ago to release the three pilots, said they still are making the men "parade around" Hanoi and "they are even using the families of these prisoners of war as propaganda tools at this particular time."

The American group had been expected to leave Hanoi with their relatives Saturday aboard a Soviet airliner bound for Vientiane, Laos. They were not on the plane when it landed and U.S. anti-war activists with the group said North Vietnam had chosen a different route, apparently fearing American authorities in Laos would try to "kidnap" the flyers.

U. S. officials have indi-

cated they will not force the pilots into American custody during their flight home but will provide the opportunity should they want to return to U. S. military custody immediately after leaving North Vietnam.

Hanoi said Elias and Gartley sent a cable to President Nixon reading: "In the best interests of all parties concerned we think we should be allowed to return to New York with the escort delegation, and be allowed to spend a few days with our families, if so desired."

The agency said Norris sent an identically worded cable to the Bureau of Naval Personnel in Washington, D.C., it said the cable was addressed to "Captain Rush."

The news agency said Elias sent another cable to his wife in Valdosta, Ga., saying: "I love you. I am in good shape. Arrival possible Thursday. Will call about meeting in New York."

Hanoi said Mrs. Charles and Mrs. Gartley sent a cable to the White House addressed to President Nixon reading: "We have been with Norris and Mark since their release a week ago and wish to assure you that they both are in excellent health and spirits." It did not mention Elias.