

3 POWs Head Home - Via China

Agence France-Presse

Hanoi

Three American pilots released by North Vietnam left here yesterday for China on the first leg of their journey back to the United States.

The American peace delegation, which came here to handle the pilots' return home, decided to travel by way of China rather than Vietnam, Laos, after reports that American officials

there intended to try to make the men fly home on a U.S. Air Force plane.

The departure plans for the three pilots — Major Edward Elias and Lieutenants Mark Gartley and Charles Morris — were kept secret until the very last minute.

Newsmen here knew that the pilots, along with members of their families and the four members of the pacifist delegation, had been given transit visas for China

last Saturday. *23 SEP*

However, none of them was certain that there would be enough seats on the Viscount airliner of the Chinese airline, CAC, which flew them finally from Hanoi's Gia Lam airport to Nanking, just inside China from North Vietnam.

Scores of Vietnamese gathered to watch the departure of the motorcade, which, unusually, was led by a motorcyclist, something

even leading officials do without in North Vietnam.

The American passengers, who included Gartley's wife and Morris' mother, were expected to spend the night in Nanking before flying on to Peking this morning.

The delegation which came to Hanoi to supervise the release of the pilots consisted of Cora Weiss, David Dellinger, the Rev. William Sloane Coffin and Professor Richard Falk.