

# POWs in Russ U.S. Embassy Confrontation

MOSCOW — (AP) — Three liberated American airmen reached Moscow on their way home today from North Vietnam and found themselves in the center of a struggle between American Embassy officials and U.S. peace advocates who escorted the pilots.

The pilots turned down an offer to be flown on a U.S. Air Force medical evacuation plane from Copenhagen. They said they preferred to continue their trip home by commercial plane.

Lt. Mark Gartley and Lt. Norris Charles of the Navy and Maj. Edward Elias of the Air Force arrived on a flight from Peking.

U.S. Charge D'Affairs Adolph Dubs attempted to approach the pilots in the customs area of the airport but was stopped by the escorting delegation of antiwar activists.

The activists were attempting to get the men back to the United States before they come under U.S. military jurisdiction again.

Under military law, the men are required to present themselves to the first U.S. official they encounter.

Prof. Richard Falk barred Dubs' way as he approached the men. Falk told the American diplomat that his government promised to escort the pilots home safely.

### Pilots Huddle

Gartley, Charles and Elias huddled in a corner behind Cora Weiss as Dubs and other embassy officials tried to approach them.

Lt. Gartley told newsmen, "I am tired but in good health. We want to get to New York as soon as possible and spend a few days with our relatives."

They are expected in New York tomorrow night.

Dubs said the pilots told him in a conference with Soviet and North Vietnamese officials present that they preferred to continue their flight on a commercial plane and that they would be spending the night in a Moscow hotel.

### Bed, Board

Dubs said that he offered to put the pilots and their escorts up for the night at the ambassador's residence.

He said he had gone to the airport to "greet them and welcome them on behalf of . . . all our country."

Dubs said he had relayed to the pilots personal mes-

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sages from their families and given them U.S. passports which the pilots signed.

### Continue Talks

The diplomat said in another question pilots are "quite clearly still members of the armed forces."

Dubs and other embassy officials left the airport while the pilots and their escorts continued to confer.

Dubs said he had made "no comment" on the pilots' actions. The primary concern of the U.S. government

was the welfare of the pilots.

Falk, the delegation lawyer, advised the men that in his opinion they were not legally bound by a direct order from a superior officer, and therefore would not have to follow directions of embassy officials if they did not wish to.



NAVY LT. NORRIS CHARLES, LT. MARK GARTLEY, MAJ. EDWARD ELIAS

Three former POWs arrive at Moscow Airport on way home

—AP Photo