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U.S. Plan for POWs' Return

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The Defense Department has set up a plan to return prisoners of war quietly and gradually to their families when they are released from North Vietnam, the American Medical News reported yesterday.

The News, a publication of the American Medical Association, quoted Pentagon officials as saying every effort will be made to help prisoners adjust from years of confinement to ordinary life with their families. There will be little fanfare, it said.

The POW may not be reunited with his family for days or even weeks after his release in Vietnam, according to the plan.

Dr. Richard S. Wilbur, assistant secretary of defense for health and environment, was quoted as saying, "The basic decision about when the men are able to come home will be in the hands of their attending physicians. Their return will not be held up for any other reason."

RECEPTION

The article said after his release, a prisoner will be taken to the nearest U.S. medical facility in South Vietnam for a physical examination.

Next, he will go to a reception center in Guam, Okinawa or the Philippines where he will be assigned an attending physician and meet a companion officer who will accompany him the rest of the way back to the United States.

At the reception center the POW, as gently as possible, will be told of changes in his family since he last saw them—deaths, illnesses and possibly a divorce by his wife, the News said.

After a period of rest, the

article said, the man will be fitted with a new uniform and will board an air force C-141 hospital plane equipped with a bunk and chair for each of the released men, to be flown to the West Coast.

HOSPITAL

From there, he will be taken to the military hospital nearest his home where he will be reunited with his family and may be kept there for additional weeks on a "hospital status."

United Press