

Hot Dogs and Milkshakes Ruled Out for POWs

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CLARK AIR BASE, Philippines, Jan. 27—Unlike their counterparts released in the Korean War a generation ago, the American POWs scheduled to climb aboard U.S. medical evacuation aircraft in Hanoi for the long journey home will receive no hot dogs and milkshakes.

"Just a little liquid nourishment, that's all they'll get at first," said Col. Leonard W. Johnson Jr., who commands the hospital aircraft

and hopes to be the first American to step onto North Vietnamese soil for the operation.

"We learned our lesson after Korea," said Johnson, a doctor, who comes from Elkhart, Ind., and is commander of the 9th Aeromedical Evacuation Group.

"We gave our released men hot dogs and milkshakes because they asked for them when they crossed into our lines. But 10 minutes later it came up again. They just got sick. We don't

intend to make that mistake this time."

After a three-hour flight from Hanoi to Clark Air Base in the Philippines, the first extensive medical check will be made.

On each of the ultramodern C-9 Nightingale medical jets will be a pair of attractive American nurses and all kinds of medication and emergency equipment.

The four planes in the special evacuation group go on alert Sunday.

"We can get the first

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plane off within an hour," Johnson said. "The other three can be on their way one hour after that."

"U.S. authorities already have an approximate idea of the state of health of many of the more than 400 prisoners of war in Hanoi because of accounts from released men. Some prisoners are known to be extremely ill and bedridden.

"I'm prepared for broken legs, the effects of vermin, insects, and even psychiatric cases," said Dr. Johnson.

"All preparations have been made for the worst case. Anything short of that will be a piece of cake."

Dr. Johnson, who will be aboard the first plane, said he will personally check out the first group of prisoners at Hanoi airport. "I will make a rapid assessment, and ask them how they feel. Any bleeding? Fever?"

Each of the hospital planes will have a doctor aboard. Special equipment includes sealed compartments for any POWs with contagious diseases.