

## Civilian P.O.W.'s to Get Help If They Don't Make Statements

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By JAMES P. STERBA JAN 31 1973

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CLARK AIR BASE, the Philip-  
pines, Jan. 30—Returning Amer-  
ican civilian prisoners of war  
will be given the same medical  
examinations and treatment  
that returning soldiers receive,  
but they will be ejected from  
the program if they make pub-  
lic statements, a State Depart-  
ment spokesman said here to-  
day.

The spokesman, Irwin K. Te-  
ven, a press officer attached to  
the American Embassy in Ma-  
nila, said that the civilian  
prisoners could participate fully  
in the Pentagon's Operation  
Homecoming only if they agreed  
to follow military rules prohib-  
iting statements about their  
treatment either while they  
were captives of the North  
Vietnamese or in United States  
military custody.

"If they talk to the press,  
that would be tantamount to  
opting out of the system," Mr.  
Teven said.

The civilians will be given  
transportation aboard military  
medical-evacuation flights out  
of North Vietnam to Clark Air  
Base, Mr. Teven said. Here they  
will be advised of their choices,  
either to obey Pentagon orders  
or to speak out and lose oppor-  
tunities for medical care and  
examinations here as well as  
free military transportation  
back to the United States and  
further medical care there.

Mr. Teven said that the rea-  
son for the policy was to con-

form to Pentagon rules forbid-  
ding returning military prison-  
ers of war to speak publicly.

The military prisoners can  
be ordered not to make state-  
ments and be disciplined or  
court-martialed for disobeying  
such orders, because technical-  
ly they have not been dis-  
charged from military service.

Discharges, for those who  
want them, will not be granted  
until the prisoners have  
completed "processing" under  
Operation Homecoming. This  
includes medical examinations  
and questioning.

The military policy forbid-  
ding public statements by re-  
turning prisoners is intended to  
insure their privacy, military  
spokesmen said here. They did  
not say, however, why the pris-  
oners would be placed under  
orders forbidding public state-  
ments if they wanted to make  
them.

According to a list of prison-  
ers supplied by North Vietnam,  
Hanoi holds 27 American and  
five foreign civilians. Of the 27  
Americans, at least nine are  
United States Government em-  
ployees, either of the State De-  
partment, United States Infor-  
mation Service or the Agency  
for International Development.

Most of the others were cap-  
tured while working in Vietnam  
for civilian companies under  
contract to the United States  
Government.