

Copters Fly to Pick Up P.O.W.'s in South But Dispute Develops;  
Planes Go to Hanoi for Others

# SNAG ON EXCHANGE

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## Vietcong Said to Delay

### Freedom for 27

#### Americans

NYTimes

By The Associated Press

SAIGON, South Vietnam, Monday, Feb. 12—Military sources said today that the Vietcong were delaying the scheduled release of 27 American prisoners of war held in South Vietnam in a dispute over the exchange of Communist prisoners.

United States helicopters had already flown to a Vietcong base to bring the prisoners back to Saigon.

An American hospital plane stood by at Saigon's Tan Son Nhut Air Base to fly the prisoners to Clark Air Base in the Philippines, where they will be given medical attention.

At the same time, other American planes were flying from Clark to Hanoi to pick up the rest of 142 United States prisoners scheduled for release today.

The release of American prisoners of war was stipulated in the agreement for a Vietnam cease-fire.

The helicopters left Saigon at 7 A.M. Saigon time (6 P.M. Sunday New York time) and landed at the Communist headquarters at Loc Ninh, 75 miles north of Saigon, about 55 minutes later.

They went to retrieve 19 United States servicemen and eight civilians at the site, which is 10 miles from the Cambodian border.

#### Arrangements Are Set

By SYLVAN FOX

Special to The New York Times

SAIGON, South Vietnam, Monday, Feb. 12—After a long and anxious day of negotiating, final arrangements were completed last night for the release of 27 Americans held captive by the Communists in South Vietnam.

There remained lingering uncertainty, however, about whether 1,000 captive South Vietnamese soldiers and 2,000 imprisoned Communist soldiers would be exchanged without

delay.

Word that the release of the Americans was set came in a terse but dramatic announcement from Gen. Gilbert H. Woodward, the chief American delegate to the Four-Party Joint Military Commission, which includes North Vietnam, South Vietnam and the Vietcong.

General Woodward said that the prisoners — 19 American servicemen and 8 civilians — would be picked up in Loc Ninh. A Communist-held district capital about 75 miles north of Saigon near the Cambodian border.

The location of the release of the prisoners was something of a surprise. Until late last night, informed American sources had been expecting the release to take place in Quan Loi, another Communist-held town that is about 15 miles south of Loc Ninh.

There was no immediate explanation for the change in location, but it was understood to have been motivated by what an American official called "technical considerations."

The airstrips at both Quan Loi and at Loc Ninh were heavily bombed by B-52's in the months preceding the start of the Vietnam cease-fire on Jan. 28. It was thought that the Loc Ninh airfield had finally been chosen by the Joint Military Commission because its landing strip was in better

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condition than the one at Quan Loi.

General Woodward's announcement that the American prisoner-of-war release had been set ended hours of tense waiting for members of the American military command here.

The command had hoped to issue an announcement about the release by midafternoon. But hours dragged by as the members of the Joint Military Commission met secretly to iron out the final details of the release, and the command personnel grew more tense and more anxious.

"I feel like a man waiting to have a baby," said one edgy American officer as night fell and there was no word from the military commission. Finally, however, the commission meeting ended and Gen-

eral Woodward made his brief announcement.

"U. S. prisoners are scheduled to be released at Loc Ninh," the announcement said, "at 0830 Saigon time."

There was no elaboration or further details about the release.

Earlier, a South Vietnamese military spokesman had raised the prospect that the exchange of Vietnamese prisoners might be delayed at least in part.

#### Dong Ha Is Suggested

The spokesman, Col. Le Trung Hien, said that "some difficulties" had arisen among members of the Joint Military Commission about the selection of sites for the Vietnamese exchange.

Colonel Hien said that the Communist members of the military commission had proposed that some Vietnamese prisoners be repatriated at Dong Ha, a town the Communists

held near Quang Tri city, just south of the demilitarized zone dividing North and South Vietnam.

As it turned out, the colonel said, neither the airstrip at Dong Ha nor another at the Ai Tu base, north of Quang Tri, which the Communists later proposed be used as a prisoner-release point, was in usable condition.

The Communists then came up with another site, according to Colonel Hien, at a point somewhere on the bank of the Han River near Quang Tri city. The colonel said that that site was being considered last night, but that no decision had been made.

Other expected Vietnamese repatriation points being considered last night by the Joint Military Commission included Bau Can, which is about 6 miles southwest of Pleiku, Quan Loi and Loc Ninh.