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20 Freed Prisoners In Seventh Planeload

ALAMEDA, Calif. (AP) — Twenty more former American prisoners of war were winging toward home today, but fog conditions in the San Francisco area forced a switch in landing sites.

Instead of touching down at Travis Air Force Base, where six previous POW flights landed this week, the hospital jet will land at Alameda Naval Air Station, about 50 miles away. It is scheduled to arrive at 11 a.m. CST, ending an 8,000-mile journey from Clark Air Base in the Philippines.

The 20 POWs are the last of 143 released earlier this week.

The the Pentagon announced that another 20 prisoners would be released to U.S. authorities in Hanoi at 5:30 p.m. CST today. By Hanoi's count, that would leave 379 more Americans still due for repatriation.

"Each of us feels when we see a small child waving a flag that every day we spent was worth it," said Navy Capt. Harry T. Jenkins Jr. of Washington, D.C., spokesman for the 20 men enroute home today before their big Starlifter transport left Clark.

Two were on stretchers — the first of those to come home who are unable to walk. Both were wearing leg casts for fractures.

SIXTY FORMER prisoners of war returned to home soil on three flights Friday, including Lt. Cmdr. Everett Alvarez Jr. of Santa Clara, Calif., the first American flyer shot down in Vietnam.

Alvarez, a prisoner of the Communists for 8½ years, appeared gaunt and unsmiling as he told a cheering,

flag-waving crowd of 1,000, "God bless you, Mr. and Mrs. America, you did not forget us."

It was a bittersweet homecoming for the 35-year-old Navy flier, whose wife, Tangee, divorced him two years ago and remarried.

After pausing at the plane door, Alvarez walked briskly down the ramp to touch again the ground of his home state, and crisply saluted the American flag and welcoming generals.

Then he stepped to a microphone and said, "For years and years we've dreamed of this day, and we kept faith — faith in God, in our President and our country.

"It was this faith that maintained our hope that some day our dreams would come true, and today they have. God bless the President and God bless you, Mr. and Mrs. America, you did not forget us," he said, his voice heavy with emotion.

THE ONLY AMERICAN held in an enemy prison longer than Alvarez is Army Maj. Floyd Thompson, who was taken prisoner March 26, 1964, four months before Alvarez' capture. Thompson has not been freed.

Asked what kept him going in the 102 months he was in Communist hands, Alvarez replied, "Prayers, faith in my country and faith in my fellow prisoners." *

Alvarez was reunited with his parents, Mr. and Mrs. Everett Alvarez Sr. of Santa Clara, Calif., and two sisters after a car ride to Oak Knoll Naval Hospital in Oakland.

* See KCBS 16 Feb 73