

Saigon Talks on Freeing Of Prisoners Are Stalled

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SAIGON, South Vietnam, Tuesday, Feb. 27—Arrangements for the second round of prisoner releases were stalled here late last night and it was unclear when the next group

of Americans would be freed by the North Vietnamese and the Vietcong.

American officials had expected the Communists to turn over a list of prisoners yesterday whom they would release today, but no such list was forthcoming.

"The Communists have refused to respond to inquiries as to whether they are going to release prisoners on Feb. 27," an American source said last night.

North Vietnamese sources were quoted as saying that they planned no release of prisoners today.

[After a meeting Monday of the Four-Party Joint Military Commission, of which the United States, North and South Vietnam and the Vietcong are members, Reuters reported that a source close to the commission had said that "the North Vietnamese told the Americans at the meeting that the release of prisoners would go ahead on schedule."]

'Making Us Sweat'

"They're just making us sweat, that's all," said an exasperated American official close to the Four-Party Joint Military Commission, which deals with prisoner releases.

The official said that at one point he had received a report from the Communists that they were waiting for a list of prisoners who would be released to arrive from Hanoi. He denied that this was true and insisted that "they've got the list—they're just making us sweat."

Early in the day, Americans

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working with the commission were calm, and confident that the prisoner release would eventually be worked out. As the day, then the night, wore on, they became tense and edgy. "We don't know what's going on" said one. "There seems to be a big game going on."

The first group of American prisoners was released on Feb. 26 from Hanoi and from Loc Binh in the Communist-held North of South Vietnam. That group consisted of 143 men released by Hanoi and 27, including 8 civilians, set free by the Vietcong in the South. Last night, as a demonstration of good faith after Henry A. Kissinger's visit to Hanoi, 20 more prisoners were released there.

15-Day Question

According to the schedule worked out with the Communists, the freeing of American prisoners was supposed to take place every 15 days.

The Paris agreement does not specify that American prisoners must be released every 15 days. It says only that all American prisoners must be released within 60 days after the agreement is signed and that they shall be released at a rate no slower than the rate at which American troops withdraw from Vietnam. The agreement was signed on Jan. 27.

Since the agreement says that the American troops should withdraw in four phases of 15 days each, the assumption has been that the prisoners would be released in similar increments.

The delay in the release developed against a background of exchanges of charges and countercharges by the Communists and Saigon.

The Communists accused Saigon of hiring "a gang of hooligans" to attack North Vietnamese officers in Da Nang and Hue on Sunday night.

*See Kissinger press conference, NYTimes 25 Jan 73, p. 21, col. 5.

Missile Sites Cited

Saigon can be charged that the Communists had committed a "flagrant violation" of the ceasefire agreement by erecting three surface-to-air missile sites near Khe Sanh, just south of the demilitarized zone. The attack of the North Vietnamese on the North Vietnamese way into Da Nang compounds the report of the presence of Communist officers in those northern cities of South Vietnam.

In Hue, five North Vietnamese officers were injured by rocks thrown by the intruders, who, according to witnesses, encountered only light resistance from South Vietnamese policemen.

Gen. Le Quang Hoa, the chief of the North Vietnamese delegation to the Joint Military Commission, charged that the mobs were "a gang of hooligans hired by the Saigon administration."

A commission source said that three of the North Vietnamese injured at Hue had asked to be flown to Saigon and hospitalized. Doctors at the scene, the source said, decided that the injuries were not serious enough for medical evacuation, but yesterday the United States finally flew two of the men to Saigon for treatment and they were later flown to Hanoi.

Not the First Time

A few weeks ago, a group of Communist representatives to the commission were assaulted by a rock-throwing mob in Ban Me Thout in central South Vietnam, in an incident similar to those in Hue and Da Nang.

There is widespread belief here that these incidents have been inspired by local authorities, either acting on orders from Saigon or convinced that Saigon would approve their actions.

Asked about the incidents at Hue and Da Nang, a Saigon Government spokesman characterized them as "the spontaneous reaction of the people." He said the incidents would be investigated.

In a response of another sort, the Saigon Government said that the Communists had placed three missile sites in an area within three miles of the Khe Sanh airstrip in the extreme northwest corner of South Vietnam. Khe Sanh has been in Communist hands since last spring's North Vietnamese offensive.

The Government, asking for an investigation by the International Commission of Control and Supervision, charged that construction of such missile sites violated Article 7 of the Paris agreement. Article 7 prohibits either Saigon or the Communists from introducing troops or weapons into South Vietnam except to replace equipment destroyed or worn out.

The South Vietnamese produced aerial photographs that, they said, showed the three locations on Jan. 24, four days before the cease-fire took effect, and on Feb. 18. They said that the missile sites had not existed on Jan. 24 but were in the pictures taken on Feb. 18.

The South Vietnamese refused to explain why they had withheld this information until yesterday, but it appeared likely that they had chosen to discuss it in an attempt to take some of the edge off the incidents at Hue and Da Nang.

American intelligence sources who saw the photographs said that they did, indeed, depict sites for SAM-2's. These missiles were used by the North Vietnamese to defend Hanoi and Haiphong against heavy American bombing. Asked what the missiles might be protecting in Khe Sanh, in Quang Tri Province about seven miles from Laos, a Saigon spokesman declined to comment.

Denial by the North

SAIGON, Feb. 25 (AP)—Bui Tin, the chief North Vietnamese spokesman here, denied today that missiles had been moved south after the cease-fire, saying that the Vietcong had had SAM batteries in Quang Tri Province for some time.

"We answered this at the meeting this morning," he said, referring to the meeting of the Joint Military Commission, "and also questioned the validity of the photos and the dates thereon."

**Protocol on the cease-fire, Art. 8 (b); Protocol on the prisoners, Art. 4 (a). NYTimes 25 Jan 73.