

# Viet Cong Delays POW Release Day

Associated Press

## Saigon

The Viet Cong delegation today officially notified the United States government that it will release 30 American prisoners of war on Monday, at Hanoi's Gia Lam Airport, a U.S. spokesman announced.

North Vietnam had notified the U.S. earlier that it would release 106 U.S. servicemen at Gia Lam tomorrow, and it was previously expected that all 136 would be freed over the weekend.

The official notification by the Viet Cong was given to the U.S. at a meeting this morning of the four-party Joint Military Commission's subcommission on captured persons.

The date of the Viet Cong POW release was confused earlier because their delegation had announced to newsmen that the 30 American

*See Back Page*

and four other foreign prisoners would be released on Sunday at the same time North Vietnam released the 106 Americans and two Thais.

## CHARGE

The U.S. accused the Viet Cong yesterday of "playing games" with the serious business of releasing the 34 prisoners.

"The U.S. delegation has been informed by the Provisional Revolutionary Government (Viet Cong) that 34 detained persons previously listed will be released at Gia Lam airport but the PRG delegation refused to give us the date of release," the American delegation said in a statement.

The Viet Cong listed two Germans and two Filipinos to be released in addition to the 30 Americans.

The U.S. statement was released within an hour after the second of two meetings of a prisoner subcommittee of the four-party Joint Military Commission broke up in an impasse over the number of North and South Vietnamese military prisoners to be exchanged.

Earlier yesterday, the Viet Cong had announced to newsmen that the 34 prisoners captured in South Vietnam would be freed tomorrow at Gia Lam at the same time North Vietnam released 106 Americans captured in the North.

Even after the U.S. said it had been given no date by the Viet Cong for the release of the second group of Americans, a Viet Cong spokesman reaffirmed what he had announced to newsmen earlier: "The 34 prisoners will be released on Sunday at Gia Lam airport."

Asked about this Viet Cong statement, the U.S. spokesman angrily de-

clared: "They're playing games. They are a bunch of liars. For three hours this afternoon, they told us they could not give us a date of release for the 34. They said they would ask their chief and would have to wait for an answer.

"Our people repeatedly asked this question: 'Will you give us the date?' They said they could not. They tell newsmen one thing and they tell us another."

## RANKS

A number of high-ranking officers are among the 106 servicemen being released by North Vietnam, including nine Air Force colonels and five Navy captains. At least 20 of them have been held prisoner since 1966.

The Communist side reported it held 585 American military and civilian prisoners in North and South Vietnam and Laos at the time of the Vietnam peace agreement January 27. It released a total of 143 prisoners February 12 and 20 in a special release a week later.

Two more groups of American prisoners are scheduled to be freed this month by the designated deadline of March 28 for repatriation of all U.S. POWs.