

106 Released Fliers Arrive From Hanoi

By JAMES P. STERBA

Special to The New York Times

CLARK AIR BASE, the Philippines, March 4—The second large group of American prisoners of war arrived here today from Hanoi looking pale but generally healthy. Their return marked the midpoint of prisoner releases scheduled to be completed by March 28 under the Paris cease-fire accord.

All 105 of the Air Force and Navy fliers released today walked off the planes without help. Some limped slightly as they walked down the ramp and across a red carpet to waiting ambulance buses. Virtually all the men saluted the American flag and American military and civilian officials lined up to greet them.

Two Thai citizens released today also saluted United States military officers as they disembarked. American officials listed their names as Chem Bamrung Uom and Praphan Xirion but declined to provide any information about them.

Today's arrivals brought to 242 the number of Americans released thus far. Now, 234 United States military men remain in North Vietnamese captivity, according to lists provided by Hanoi.

The Vietcong are scheduled to free 27 American soldiers, three United States civilians, two West Germans and two Filipinos in Hanoi tomorrow. After this group is returned, 53 United States soldiers and 14 United States civilians will remain in Vietcong custody. In addition, nine Americans and one Canadian are acknowledged to have been captured in Laos and are still held.

Procedures for today's release in Hanoi followed a pattern set during the release on Feb. 12 of 116 Americans and on Feb. 18 when 20 men were turned over to United

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States military officials. Col. James B. Bennett of the Air Force signed a receipt for the men at a table in front of the terminal building at Hanoi's Gia Lam airfield.

Time Out for Inspection
Representatives of the Inter-

national Commission for Control and Supervision and the Four-Party Joint Military Commission flown in from Saigon this morning to delay the ceremony for about 20 minutes to inspect the detention camp in downtown Hanoi occupied by the prisoners just before their release.

The prisoners arrived in Hanoi. They were given the time and place for their flight.

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Prisoners File Out

As their names were called out by Major Torraca at 20-second intervals, the 39 other prisoners disembarked in the order in which they had been shot down. All the Americans released today were officers captured in 1966 and 1967.

The two Thais were aboard the first plane. A Thai official was at Clark but refused to speak to reporters. Hanoi had reportedly described the two men as mercenaries shot down over the North.

As during previous releases, newsmen were barred from direct contact with the returning prisoners. Instead, information officers described the flights. Major Torraca, for example,

told newsmen what happened aboard the first plane.

Nurse Bakes Cakes

One nurse aboard, he said, baked three cakes to serve the men on the way to Clark.

"The little touches were numerous on the aircraft," said Major Torraca. "I noticed that the latrines didn't have paper towels. They had been replaced with very fancy flowered towels."

Most of the men, he said, "were absolutely smiles from ear to ear." "In fact," he continued, "one guy told me when he got on the airplane he thought his face was going to bust because he hadn't smiled so much in a long time. There was a lot of shouts, clapping, whistling, hoots, hollers, stuff flying through the air as we broke ground."

"There were a lot of stories aboard the aircraft during the flight," said Major Torraca. "But the one I personally got the biggest kick out of was the guy who showed me the factory slogan by the Vietcong and he told me, 'You, I am sure, don't do these things and I was determined not to do them when the North said I would work for you and take away my six years' take.'"

The second prisoner aboard the aircraft was Col. James H. Larson, a 45-year-old Air Force major from Winona, Minn., who had been in North Vietnamese captivity for six years, he said.

"We now know what freedom really is and how great the world was in it. We left so many years ago. It was our duty to God, our country and our families that sustained us through these long years. We are very grateful for this. On behalf of all of us, God bless you all."

One man aboard the second plane, Lieut. Col. John A. Dr-

meski, 40, of Philadelphia, displayed a handkerchief with an American flag on it as he disembarked. Newsmen managed to talk briefly with him through the bus window. He said he made the flag while in prison. He said the blue stars were cut from a jacket. The red stripes, he said, were made from a pair of red women's panties he received in the mail. He and fellow prisoners saluted the flag each night before retiring, he said.



U.S. Air Force via Associated Press
 Lieut. Comdrs. Gareth L. Anderson, left, of Kane, Pa., and Read B. McCleary of Old Greenwich, Conn., with Capt. Patricia Campbell of Westbury, L.I., flight nurse, during the flight from Hanoi's Gia Lam airfield to Clark Air Base in the Philippines.



Leo Lockwood/Black Star



Associated Press

Comdr. Richard A. Stratton of Palo Alto, Calif., bowing at Hanoi news conference, left, on March 4, 1967, and arriving yesterday at Clark Air Base. Details are on Page 14.