

34 More Captives Arrive at Clark

by James P. Sterba

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Medical Aides

...st Germans were as medical mission- for the Maltese Aid Service, a German Catholic charity mission, when they were captured near Da Nang on April 27, 1969. Three of their fellow workers were reported killed at the same time and place.

The release ceremonies in Hanoi today were reported to be similar to earlier ones except that the Communist delegation was made up entirely of members of the Provisional Revolutionary Government. American Air Force officials said no North Vietnamese officials were present at Gia Lam airfield. The ceremony was delayed for two hours because of maintenance trouble aboard the C-130 cargo plane that brought members of the International Commission for Control and Supervision and the Four-Party Joint Military Commission from Saigon.

Officials here said that members of both groups, including an American Air Force lieutenant colonel, inspected the camp where the prisoners who were released today were last detained. The officials said the captured had been imprisoned in the Hanoi area for at least several months, if not years, although all were captured in South Vietnam.

A 'Courtesy Measure'

The Paris protocol on prisoners does not specify that members of the Joint Military Commission would inspect the camps, but officials here said the control commission delegates had allowed them to join in all inspections as a "courtesy measure." The American military inspectors of the Hanoi camps are representatives on the prisoner-of-war subcommittee of the Joint Military Commission, officials here said.

The prisoners who returned today looked much healthier than those released by the Vietcong on Feb. 12 at Loc Ninh in South Vietnam. Two soldiers had to be helped off the plane. One, Sgt. Bill A. Baird 23-year-old Army man from Wooster, Ohio, a captive for five years, used crutches to disembark. Another, an Army sergeant, Gail Mason Kerns, 26, of Valley Bend, W. Va., was carried off the plane on a stretcher but officials here said he insisted on walking unaided during the release ceremony in Hanoi.

Only a few hundred Clark Air Base residents turned out to greet the returning prisoners today. Relatively heavy security measures were imposed for President Marcos's arrival. Six German shepherd police dogs with their American Air Force handlers stood in the background. Members of the presidential guard, carrying submachine guns, were also sprinkled around the terminal area.