

POW Release

Set Wednesday

SAIGON — (UPI) — A Viet Cong press officer said yesterday the Joint Military Commission's subcommission on captured persons had tentatively agreed to release the next 137 American prisoners of war Wednesday. *14 MAR*

The subcommission went into conference today at the request of the Viet Cong, which said that the scheduled release of captured South Vietnamese troops yesterday had been called off because of attacks by South Vietnamese forces at the release sites on the central coast yesterday. The South Vietnamese denied there was any fighting in the area.

U.S. Delegate

The chief U.S. delegate to the Joint Military Commission, Maj. Gen. Gilbert Woodward, requested details on the next release of U.S. prisoners by today.

He said the Viet Cong and Hanoi have acknowledged that the return of U.S. prisoners "is related only to the withdrawal of U.S. forces and the forces of countries allied with the United States and the Republic of Vietnam."

286 Remain

As of Friday, Woodward said, 75 percent of these forces have been withdrawn from South Vietnam, "leaving a total of 7356 remaining to go home."

A Wednesday release would follow the schedule set up in the peace agreement ending the Vietnam war. The North Vietnamese and Viet Cong have freed 288 military prisoners and 11 civilians — all Americans — since the cease-fire went into effect Jan. 28. A total of 286 remain in Communist hands.