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## P.O.W. Commander Among 108 Freed

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Special to The New York Times

CLARK AIR BASE, the Philippines, March 14—North Vietnam released 108 more American prisoners of war today, including the officer who had acted as commander of prisoners captured in the North.

They arrived aboard three Air Force C-141 Starlifter medical-evacuation jets after what was described as a routine turnover ceremony at Gia Lam Airfield in Hanoi. Like those who preceded them, they looked pale but generally healthy. A few limped.

The men were taken to the base hospital and given a dinner that included steak, eggs, fried chicken, corn on the cob, vegetables, salads, fruits and ice cream.

The release left 178 Americans and one Canadian in captivity, according to lists supplied by the Vietnamese Communists. The Vietcong were scheduled to release 32 more Americans Friday. The remaining 147 of the prisoners captured in North and South Vietnam and Laos are to be released by March 28 under the cease-fire agreement reached Jan. 27 by the United States and North Vietnam.

### Not on American Lists

One civilian released today had not been listed by American officials as a captive though his name was reportedly on Hanoi's original compilation. He was identified as Bobby Joe Keesee, 39 years old, a native of Amarillo, Tex. He was reported to have commandeered a Thai plane in 1970 and forced the pilot to fly him to North Vietnam, where he was captured and treated as a prisoner.

Today he was not welcomed when he arrived on the third plane from Hanoi. Rather, he was escorted unseen onto a separate bus. A State Department official, James P. Murphy, who said Mr. Keesee was happy to be out of captivity and looked healthy, declined to discuss the circumstances of his capture.

The military men released—Air Force, Navy and Marine—were all officers and fliers. All but one were shot down and captured in 1967 and 1968; the exception was downed in December, 1971.

The prisoners' commander was an Air Force colonel, John P. Flynn, 50 years old and originally from Cleveland. He had wanted to stay until the final group was out, but North Vietnamese officials reportedly

### Civilian Among Them— Rest Are Pilots Held Since 1967 or '68

said that he must be released on the basis of date of capture. He was shot down by a surface-to-air missile on Oct. 27, 1967, while on a mission in an F-105 fighter-bomber.

Colonel Flynn, an aerial combat veteran of World War II and the Korean war, said on arrival:

"This is a very exciting moment for all of us here. I'd just like to say simply that as a group we have been privileged to serve our country under very difficult circumstances. I would also like to thank our President, the services, the people of the United States for their support and efforts, and lives that were expended in our behalf.

"I would like to particularly acknowledge the courage and the integrity of our President. We knew that he must have been faced with many, many tough decisions and circumstances, such as bombing Hanoi. He had our support and our prayers always."

"We knew about the efforts of millions of American people," the colonel continued. "We knew about the bumper stickers. We knew about the silences at football games. We knew about the buttons on the lapels. It sustained us. It had a tremendous impact on our morale. We never lost faith in our country.

"Finally, I would like to say that I have been in better places but I have never been with better people. Our men performed magnificently. They were first-class soldiers. They were first-class citizens and they asked me to thank you for your support and to say God bless all of you."

### Admiral's Son Is Freed

One of the more notable prisoners was Lieut. Cmdr. John S. McCain 3d of the Navy, a 36-year-old fighter-bomber pilot and the son of John S. McCain Jr., who recently retired as commander of United States forces in the Pacific. His hair was gray, almost white in patches, after almost five and a half years as a prisoner, and as he limped off the plane he held the handrail. He was warmly greeted by Adm. Noel A. M. Gayler, his father's successor.

The senior returning prisoner

off the first plane, Capt. Leo T. Proffitt of the Navy, a 44-year-old native of Cairo, Ill., who had been held nearly six years, told his welcomers:

"For all of us, and believe me from the bottom of our hearts, I want to thank God, the United States of America and all you wonderful, good-looking people."

About 300 spectators had turned out, a much smaller crowd than before.

The senior officer aboard the third plane, Col. David W. Winn, 49, of the Air Force, who is from Minneapolis, borrowed a crewmen's flight suit rather than appear in the blue trousers and shirt recently issued to him by the North Vietnamese.

"There is no way for me to speak or to express my feelings for all these men that are coming to us now," he said. "Their joy and their hopes and their talents are individual things, but these things belong to America. You brought us home with honor and we hope to serve you well. To borrow from Keats, freedom is happiness and happiness is freedom — that's all we need to know, and it's all we know today. For each of us, I would like to thank each of you for this day. God bless you all."

### The Scene in Hanoi

HANOI, North Vietnam, March 14 (UPI)—The American in the baggy blue shirt and pants shook hands with a uniformed Air Force officer.

"Are you my escort officer?" he asked. "Not exactly," the man said. "But I'm going to get you to that plane and get you the hell out of here."

Today, for the fourth time, North Vietnam was turning prisoners of war over to the American military.

Patient, somber prisoners stood beside green-camouflaged buses waiting for a North Vietnamese officer to call their names through a bullhorn.

Smiling, happy former prisoners took two steps, shook hands with American officials and were escorted to one of the waiting jets for the flight to Clark Air Base.

Other prisoners could be seen looking out of cell windows as their buddies prepared to leave. They could be seen by a visitor to the camp, dressed in gray uniforms and wearing sandals made from old tires and inner tubes. Their expressions were somber.

### 'Last Point of Detention'

The men who were going home changed from expressionless prisoners to animated excited American officers not long after their release from Ly Nam De, the camp known generally as the Hanoi Hilton and referred to by North Vietnamese officials as "the last point of detention for captured personnel." It still holds an undetermined number of Americans.

Yellowed stucco walls surround a complex of cells and a central courtyard whose only visible features are a couple of clotheslines, a basketball net on a pole and a few trees.

Though some of the Americans peeked through their cell windows, others ducked, apparently to avoid photographers.

Newsmen were allowed to join an official tour, but it was brief and cursory. There was no contact with the prisoners.

### Air Piracy Is Charged

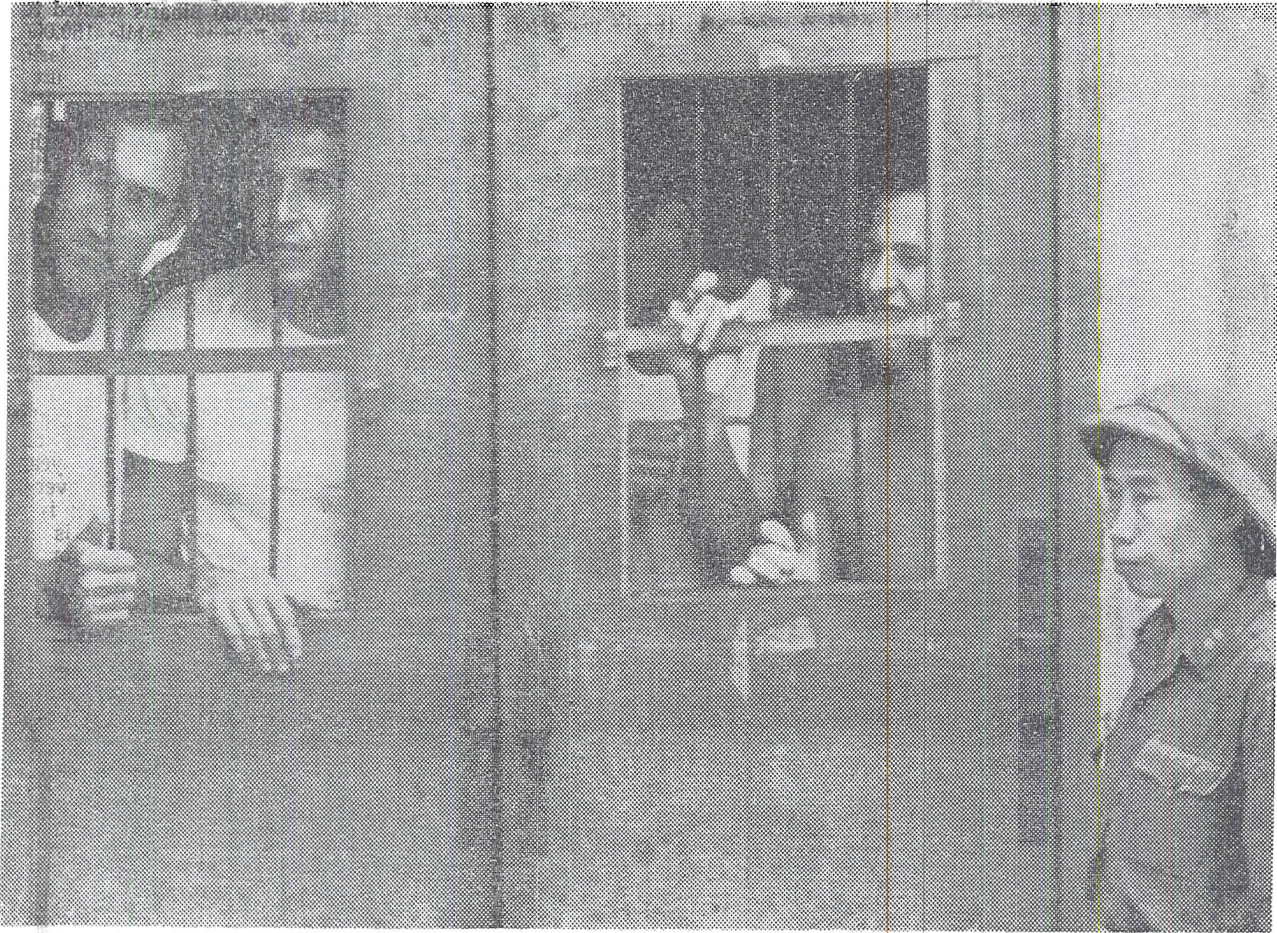
BANGKOK, Thailand, March 14 (UPI)—The owner of a Thai light plane that he said was hijacked to North Vietnam by an American civilian more than two years ago demanded today that the American be punished on charges of air piracy.

Prince Bira Bongse Bhanubandh, chairman and chief executive of Bira Wir Transport, said his plane was rented by Bobby Joe Keesee in September, 1970, supposedly to survey locations for a film about Thailand.

The Prince said that he would file a civil case against Mr. Keesee, who, he said, owes almost \$2,000 in rental fees and interest.

Other stories on Keesee are filed CIA, 13, 14, 19 Mar 73.

This file has been checked for stories on Keesee only through 31 Mar 73.



LEFT BEHIND: American prisoners of war looking toward freedom from the last detention camp in Hanoi



LEAVING HANOI: American officers being directed yesterday toward the release ceremony



Associated Press

**ARRIVAL AT CLARK: Lieut. Comdr. John S. McCain 3d  
limps from a plane at Clark Air Base. Details, Page 4.**