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U.S. Says Civilian POW Tortured

Clark Air Base,
Philippines

United States hospital sources said yesterday the North Vietnamese tortured Bobby Joe Keesee, the mysterious civilian released by Hanoi last week, possibly because they thought he was a spy.

The sources said his captors knocked out Keesee's front teeth and pulled out his fingernails.

Keesee, 39, a Korean war paratrooper who was captured in North Vietnam in 1970 under mysterious circumstances, was freed last Wednesday with 107 military prisoners of war in Hanoi. He underwent medical examinations at the Clark Air Base hospital before returning Saturday to the United States.

Hospital sources said Keesee was fitted with new teeth to replace those he lost.

"They treated him pretty rough," one source said. "They must have thought he was a spy."

Two Thai pilots said earlier that Keesee, a one-time resident of Amarillo, Tex., forced them to fly him at gunpoint from Bangkok to a beach in North Vietnam, where they left him on Sept. 18, 1970. They said he chartered their small aircraft on the pretense of looking for a remote location for the making of a motion picture.

Exact details of his capture and the reason for his trip to North Vietnam have not been disclosed.

United Press