

# Last P.O.W.'s Being Freed As U.S. Resumes Pullout

NYTimes MAR 28 1973  
32 Reach the Philippines

NYTimes MAR 28 1973  
936 Men Leave in Day

By The Associated Press

By FOX BUTTERFIELD  
Special to The New York Times

CLARK AIR BASE, the Philippines, Wednesday, March 28—The final stage in the release of American prisoners of the Vietnam war began yesterday as 32 who had been held by the Vietcong were freed in Hanoi and flown to Clark Air Base.

The Americans—27 servicemen and 5 civilians, described as the last to be held by the Vietcong—arrived here at 6:52 [5:52 A.M. Tuesday, New York time].

"Man's most precious possession, second only to life itself, is freedom," said the senior officer of the group, Col. Benjamin E. Purcell, 45 years old, of Columbus, Ga. He was captured Feb. 8, 1968, when his helicopter crashed in South

Continued on Page 9, Column 1

SAIGON, South Vietnam, March 28—The withdrawal of the remaining American troops in Vietnam resumed yesterday.

The first planeload of 78 men, showing no sign of emotion, silently boarded an Air Force C-141 jet transport late in the afternoon at Tan Son Nhut Airbase.

Vietcong and North Vietnamese delegates to the Four-Party Joint Military Commission stood near the plane, counting and photographing those departing.

In all, 936 of the more than 5,000 United States troops in Vietnam left yesterday, with 1,800 scheduled to depart today and the remaining 2,500 tomorrow, one day after the 60-day

Continued on Page 8, Column 1

## LAST OF P.O.W.'S ARE BEING FREED

Continued From Page 1, Col. 2

Vietnam's northernmost province, Quang Tri.

Forty-nine other United States prisoners were due here today—40 from captivity in North Vietnam and 9 from Laos. The release of the 9 was agreed to after President Nixon had held up withdrawal of United States combat forces from South Vietnam.

Scheduled to come out with them is a Canadian missionary who was working in a hospital for the Laotian poor when captured last October.

The last 67 Americans known to be held by the North Vietnamese are to be released tomorrow, bringing to 589 the number of United States military and civilian prisoners freed by the Communists since the Vietnamese cease-fire agreement was signed Jan. 27.

Like most of the prisoners earlier, the 32 Americans who landed here yesterday wore clothing given to them by their captors—light gray shirts, gray windbreakers and blue-gray trousers.

All appeared underweight, and several seemed uncertain how to react as they stepped into the beams of floodlights to be greeted by a crowd of shouting well-wishers, most of them air base personnel.

The departure of their C-141 flying hospital from Hanoi had been held up more than an hour by a rainstorm that delayed the arrival from downtown Hanoi of members of the International Commission of Control and Supervision to observe the transfer.

### Colonel Is Spokesman

Speaking on arrival here on behalf of the prisoners, Colonel Purcell said:

"In the years, our faith in our country, in our way of life and in our President has been unwavering. And we wish at this time to express our thanks to our President Nixon and to the American people for keeping faith with us."

The 32 began calls to home to their families almost immediately after their arrival. They feasted on chicken and steak and some were reported still eating at a snack bar shortly before midnight. As they waited in line for dinner in the hospital cafeteria, they received glasses of milk and chocolate milk.

All were declared in reasonably good shape by doctors who gave them preliminary checks.

### A Short-Term Prisoner

The 32 Americans who arrived yesterday included one who spent the shortest time in captivity—Lieut. Comdr. Phillip A. Kientzler of the Navy, whose F-4 Phantom was shot down on Jan. 27 just hours before the Vietnam cease-fire officially went into effect.

He was on a mission from the carrier Enterprise and was captured by Vietcong guerrillas near the demilitarized zone between the two Vietnams.

Greeting the gaunt-looking Commander Kientzler just before he stepped into a blue hospital bus here, was his former squadron commander, Comdr. Gordon Cornell, who wept in joy when he saw the pilot.

Commander Kientzler's wife, Karma, and daughter, Aleasa Lynn, live in Poway, Calif. His parents live in Wyckoff, N. J.

Downed with Commander Kientzler was Comdr. Harley H. Hall, the plane's pilot. The Pentagon has said it has independent information that Commander Hall also was taken captive, but the Vietcong have said nothing about him.

Among the nine Americans due here today from captivity in Laos is a civilian who is one of those held longest in the Indochina hostilities. He is Ernest C. Brace, 41, of Atlanta, who was captured in Laos May 21, 1965.

The other American civilian among the nine, Samuel A. Matix, 20, of Centralia, Wash., and the Canadian Lloyd Opper, also 20, of Courtenay, B. C., were missionaries working at a hospital in Kengkok, southern Laos.

### Pathet Lao Explanation

Special to The New York Times

VIENTIANE, Laos, March 27—The Communist-led Pathet Lao said today that it had continuing "bombing raids, re-will and peace in Laos to accede to American requests that foreign prisoners held by the Laotian Communists be released this week in Hanoi.

At the same time the Pathet Lao spokesman, Sot Petras, charged that Americans were continuing bombing raids, reconnaissance flights, spying and airspace violations over liberated Laotian territory" and he demanded that such activities be halted.

### Denies Bowing to U.S.

Mr. Sot Petras said that seven of the nine American prisoners to be released by the Pathet Lao in Hanoi in the next two days were servicemen and two more civilians.

"In principle," he said, "they were to have been released within 60 days after the formation of a provisional government in Laos."

But, he said, to demonstrate "goodwill in supporting the Laotian peace agreement signed last month, and at the request of the United States," the Central Committee of the Neo Lao Hak Sat party decided that prisoners would be released in Hanoi "with the assistance of the Democratic Republic of Vietnam."

## VIETNAM PULLOUT IS RESUMED BY U.S.

Continued From Page 1, Col. 3

deadline specified by the cease-fire agreement signed in Paris Jan. 27.

The resumed withdrawals, which coincided with the beginning of the final phase of the release of American prisoners of war from Hanoi, followed a 12-day halt imposed by the United States while the freeing of the last prisoners was negotiated.

An impasse in the discussions developed last Thursday when the United States demanded that the nine captives held by the Pathet Lao in Laos be freed along with the last prisoners held by the Vietnamese Communists. Hanoi rejected the demand, insisting that it was not responsible for the actions of the Pathet Lao.

The deadlock was finally broken late Monday when the Pathet Lao press agency announced in a broadcast that the Laotians were ready to free the prisoners. The American and North Vietnamese delegates on the Joint Military Commission then agreed on the timetable for withdrawals.

### Some Men to Stay On

The only American military personnel scheduled to remain in South Vietnam after the withdrawals are completed tomorrow are 825 members of the military commission, 50 members of the military attaché's office and 159 Marine security guards for the American Embassy in Saigon and other official buildings.

MORE  
The chief delegates of the military commission are expected to meet today to discuss arrangements for the withdrawal of the American and North Vietnamese teams on the commission, with a weekend deadline probable. The commission would then consist only of Vietcong and Saigon Government representatives.

Both the Vietcong's Provisional Revolutionary Government and the North Vietnamese have objected to the presence of the sizable United States Marine security detachment. Before the deadlock was broken, they had demanded that the marines be withdrawn. American officials rejected the demand and said they felt that the Communists would drop the issues once the other American troops leave.