

Last POWs Are Due In Philippines Today

Clark Air Base, Philippines

The last regular group of U.S. war prisoners will fly here from Hanoi today to join 81 others already looking forward to a trip home this weekend.

The 67 prisoners will fly in from Hanoi on two C-141 StarLifter jets. They had been listed as the last Americans in Communist captivity, but the Viet Cong announced in Saigon that one more U.S. prisoner will be turned over.

He was identified only as Wheme, from Virginia, a captive since 1969.

The Defense Department said this apparently refers to Captain Robert T. White, who has been carried in U.S. records as a prisoner of war but never appeared on any POW lists supplied by the Communists.

He will be the 588th Amer-

ican prisoner turned over by the North Vietnamese, Viet Cong and Pathet Lao since the releases began.

Operation Homecoming officials in the Philippines said they expect all the regular returning prisoners to get their medical checks behind them in time for flights to the U.S. on Sunday or Monday.

Many in the 67-man group due in today are crewmen of B-52 bombers downed last December when President Nixon ordered intensified bombing raids on the Hanoi-Haiphong region.

Nine Americans and a young Canadian missionary, Lloyd D. Oppel, 20, of British Columbia, were freed by the Pathet Lao in Hanoi yesterday along with 40 airmen shot down over South Vietnam between December, 1971, and July, 1972.

Several were from the air-

craft carrier Coral Sea or the 523rd Tactical Fighter Squadron, which operated for years from Thailand. The 523rd now is based at Clark and its members joined crewmen of the Coral Sea, now at nearby Subic Bay, in giving the POWs one of the wildest welcomes seen for returning prisoners.

Two POWs from the Coral Sea — Lieutenant Albert R. Molinare, 27, of San Diego, and Lieutenant Commander James B. Souder, 32, of Lauderdale, Fla. — were hauled across a restraining rope by their delighted buddies who ignored security policemen.

The returned prisoners also included Ernest C. Brace, 41, the longest held civilian captive of the Indochina conflict. Brace, whose wife lives in Atlanta, Ga., was captured in Laos on May 21, 1965, reportedly after a flight for charter airline.

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