

Hanoi Denies

Torturing Prisoners

Tokyo

North Vietnam claimed yesterday it treated its American captives well and that returning prisoners' torture stories were drummed up to deflect attention from U.S. "crimes" in Vietnam.

The official Communist party newspaper Nhan Dan quoted statements from U.S. officials at the time the first U.S. prisoners left North Vietnam that the men were in good mental and physical condition.

No matter what the prisoners say now, the paper said, "the humanitarian policy" of North Vietnam's government "toward captured U.S. military personnel has been welcomed by the whole of progressive mankind."

STATEMENT

The Nhan Dan commentary, broadcast by the official Vietnam News Agency, declared: "The pilots of U.S. piratic planes who bombed during the last eight years were criminals. However, in keeping with their humanitarian policy and for the sake of their friendship with the American people, the government and the Vietnamese people treated them well. This truth no one could deny."

Nhan Dan said even the head of the U.S. delegation to the Joint Military Commission, calling at a North Vietnamese detention camp for U.S. military personnel, said "he was completely satisfied with that concentration camp and that captured U.S. B-52-crewmembers were humanely and well treated."

Now, it said, U.S. authorities "hope to fool the American and world public, which is protesting against the serious violations of the Paris agreement on Vietnam by the U.S. and the Saigon administration, and demanding that they strictly respect and scrupulously implement all the provisions of the agreement."

'WHITEWASH'

Nhan Dan charged, "They also hope to whitewash the heinous crimes they and the Saigon administration have committed at the prisons in South Vietnam and to elude the return of civilian personnel under their illegal detention." It added: "The U.S. authorities tried to rouse bigoted chauvinism among the American people in order to plead for their former mistakes and wreck the friendship between the Vietnamese and American peoples. However, they cannot easily deceive the people. Their trick will bring them no good, and will not contribute to the building of normal relations between North Vietnam and the United States, as they often claimed."

Associated Press