

Commandos, Son Tay POWs Finally Connect

By Dick Alexander

A highly trained team of Army Green Berets and Air Force volunteers dropped into San Francisco today and found what they missed 29 months ago — the Son Tay prisoners of war.

It is extremely doubtful, however, if the ex-POWs want to be rescued from the Bay Area.

This is their day — their way of saying "Sorry, fellows, we weren't in that North Vietnam compound on Nov. 20, 1970, but we're grateful."

Ticker Tape

The American commandos, led by Army Col. Arthur (Bull) Simons, found some resistance but no prisoners when they landed by helicopter that dark morning a mere 23 miles from the

enemy's capital. The prisoners had been spirited away some four months earlier.

Last night and again today the search and rescue team, with retired Col. Simons again at their head, arrived in San Francisco by commercial jets and found the Son Tay prisoners, a ticker tape parade, John Wayne and a host of other Hollywood stars, a civic luncheon, banquets and a big San Francisco welcome.

The POWs, the special task force, and wives and girlfriends were flown in from all over the globe for this history-making event through the generosity of H. Ross Perot, the Texas computer whiz and philanthropist.

Wayne's Activities

The parade through the Financial District featured all the principals, military bands and wives.

Wayne, whose movie credits include "The Green Berets," came here for the parade, the civic luncheon in the Hilton Hotel and the dinner at the Fairmont.

The luncheon, which featured an introduction of the Son Tay prisoners and raiders to the public, had Edgar Bergen as master of ceremonies.

Clint Eastwood, Red Skelton and the Andrew Sisters were to perform at tonight's dinner-dance in the Fairmont's Terrace Room. And Fairmont head Ben Swig was hosting the honored guests at the midnight show in the Venetian Room.

Tour Planned

Tours of San Francisco and the Bay Area and a bay cruise are on tap for tomorrow. The ex-POWs and raiders will sit down and chat from noon to 3 p.m. The talks are private, however,

because of the classified material involved.

Acting Mayor George Chinn issued a proclamation naming today and tomorrow "Son Tay Days" in San Francisco, urging full public support for the parade and luncheon.