

Pilot Says He Was a V.I.P. to Captors

Special to The New York Times

CLARK AIR BASE, the Philippines, Sept. 19 — Emmet James Kay, the American civilian pilot who was freed in Laos yesterday by the pro-Communist Pathet Lao, said today that he had been treated as "a very important person" during his 16 months of captivity.

"They always reminded me I was their only American captive and that I was a very important person," he said at a news conference here.

"If I had a cold or anything, they would worry over me and call in doctors."

Mr. Kay, who was believed to have been the last American prisoner of war in Indochina, said that he had had arguments with his captors at times "because I thought I was right."

"I am a loyal American," he declared.

His Life Threatened

On a few occasions, he said, his life was threatened.

"Once they asked me to bow down to them or they would shoot me," he recalled. "I defied them. I stood very erect and though I was afraid I think I gained their respect."

Mr. Kay said that he had been asked to make anti-American statements during his captivity and that he had broadcast some calls for peace in Indochina.

"I must admit," he went on, "I was quite upset with some of the problems in America, Watergate and things like that. My statements were generally all aimed at peace."

He described prospects for peace in Indochina as "very, very good" and said American efforts had contributed much to this.

Mr. Kay said that when he

was captured in northern Laos May 7, 1973, he was a civilian pilot on contract with the United States Agency for International Development, flying missions that he believed contributed to peace. He was taken prisoner when his plane ran out of fuel and had to land.

He said that his job had been to fly hospital equipment, food and "occasionally arms." He denied that he was an agent of the Central Intelligence Agency or that he had been involved in political or diplomatic activity.

He branded as a lie reports from Laos quoting him as having said that he had flown for the C.I.A. and had felt guilty about it.

During most of his activity, Mr. Kay said, he was allowed

to read books, listen to the Voice of America and swim in a river.

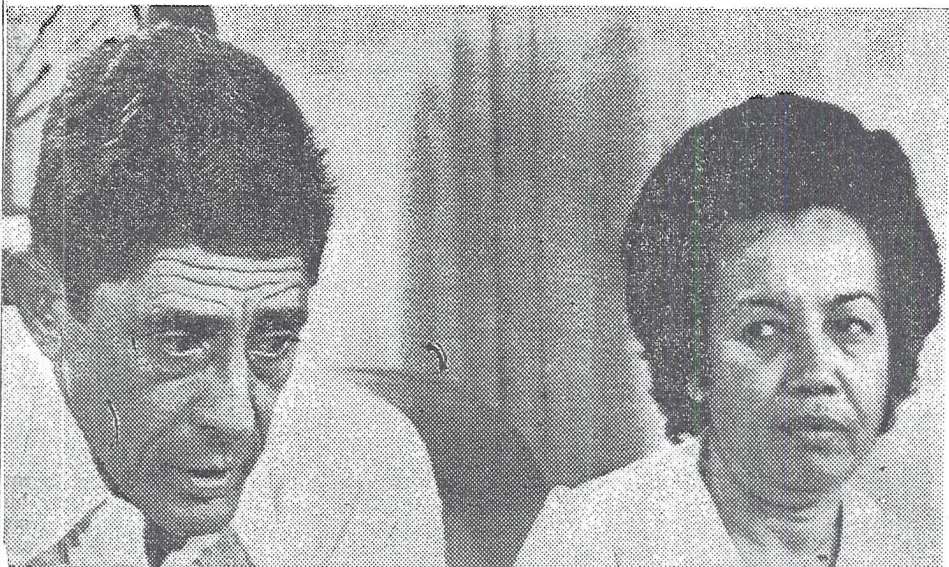
He said that he had made some friends among his captors.

"They were very good to me," he said. "I believe it's because I am half Hawaiian and though I was an enemy I understood them, they understood me."

He said that he had been told several times he would be released and that he had only 15 minutes' notice warning when he was freed at Samneua in northern Laos.

His Hawaiian-born wife, Florence, who met him in Vientiane, flew with him to Clark Air Base along with Maurice Brawnink of the United States Embassy in Laos.

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Emmet James Kay and his wife, Florence, at Clark Air Base, the Philippines, yesterday