

(ANDREWS)

February 9, 1973

STATEMENT BY THE PRESIDENT: RELEASE OF FIRST POWS

All the people of the United States, and people of good will everywhere, *will rejoice* ~~can feel~~ *relief* profound gratitude at the release today of the first group of Americans who have been held as Prisoners of War in North and South Vietnam. As these men start home to the country in whose service they and their loved ones have suffered so much, we move a long step closer to the lasting, healing peace that is our highest goal.

This moment, though it lifts the hearts of the whole nation, belongs above all to the returning men themselves and to the families waiting to welcome them. We can join most fittingly in that welcome not with fanfare, but with quite respect for their fortitude in the ordeal that is now ending and for their privacy in the time ahead.

Let us mark this "Freedom Sunday" with a prayer of thanks to God for all who have made peace possible: those who have been set free, those yet to be set free, those still missing, those who served and came home, and those who gave their lives and cannot come home -- and let us resolve anew to be worthy of the sacrifices they made for us. END

News leads: 1. "Freedom Sunday" 2. "A long step closer to lasting, healing peace".

*Dear to Tom DeCaro
Suffolk Press office*

STATEMENT BY THE PRESIDENT: RELEASE OF FIRST POW'S

As the first group of Americans held as prisoners of war in Viet Nam arrives home, the whole nation would like to be there to welcome them back to the country they have served so well.

Let us remember, however, that this moment belongs above all to the returning men themselves and to the families waiting to welcome them. We can join most fittingly in that welcome not with fanfare, but with quiet respect for their fortitude in the ordeal that is now ending and for their privacy in the time ahead.

On the Veterans Administration building in Washington are the words of Abraham Lincoln, whose birthday we are about to observe, reminding us of our obligation "to care for him who shall have borne the battle". Let us mark this special Sunday with a prayer of thanks for all who have borne this battle -- and have made peace with honor possible. And let us resolve anew to be worthy of the sacrifices they have made.

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