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23 Americans in Cuban Prisons To Be Free Soon, Donovan Feels

CHICAGO, Feb. 19 (AP) — James B. Donovan, chief negotiator for release of prisoners taken in the Bay of Pigs invasion, said today he believes 23 Americans held in Cuba will be released within a few weeks.

Donovan, a New York attorney, told members of the Inland Daily Press Association that release of Americans would not involve any exchange of goods as did the release of Bay of Pigs prisoners.

"The release of Americans is an entirely different matter," Donovan said. He declined to discuss details pending negotiations. He said he plans to return to Cuba soon to confer with Premier Fidel Castro on the release of Americans.

The image of the United States was enhanced, Donovan said, by the payment of ransom for 1300 Bay of Pigs prisoners.

"Accomplishment of this specific mission, with Latin America and other countries watching, increased the image of America worldwide," he said.

Donovan also said Cubans were aware that drugs and food used for ransom came from the United States because much of it was marked with the U.S. flag or other identification.