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Prisoners' Release Set For Sunday

Castro Seals Deal; Food, Medicine To Be Exchanged

By James E. Clayton
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The release of 1118 Cuban prisoners held by Premier Fidel Castro for almost two years will begin early Sunday morning. A formal agreement under which the prisoners were ransomed for \$53 million in food, medicine and medical supplies was signed in Havana late yesterday.

The agreement was announced here last night by Gen. Lucius Clay, chairman of the Cuban Families Advisory Committee, and E. Roland Harriman, chairman of the American National Red Cross.

Under the terms of the agreement, the African Pilot, a freighter now loading supplies in Port Everglades, Fla., will sail for Havana Saturday afternoon. At the same time, 20 paneloads of additional supplies will be readied at Opa-locka Air Base at Miami for immediate shipment. Those planes will begin shuttling back and forth to Havana at 6 a. m. Sunday.

The agreement says that 20 per cent of the \$53 million in supplies will be delivered to Cuba before the prisoners are released. The rest of the supplies may then be delivered some time before next July 15.

Ship in Readiness

The hope here is that the four cargo planes will be allowed to return to Miami with able-bodied prisoners. Another ship, the Wappen von Hamburg, will remain in Miami ready to leave for Havana immediately if it is needed to carry prisoners who are too ill to make the trip by plane.

The prisoners, often described by officials here as "the cream of Cuba's young men," were captured during the abortive invasion at the Bay of Pigs in April, 1961. They all were sentenced to long prison terms for their part in that invasion.

Last April, Castro ransomed 60 of the more seriously ill and wounded men for \$2.5 million in cash. He had demanded cash for the remaining men and had set a price on each man's freedom.

Crisis Interrupts

James B. Donovan, a New York attorney who engineered the exchange of Russian spy Rudolph I. Abel for U-2 pilot Francis Gary Powers last year, began negotiations with Castro in August on behalf of the prisoners.

The deal had almost been closed when the crisis over Russian missiles based in Cuba arose in October. Negotiations were renewed as soon as that crisis cooled down.

Within the last few days, hundreds of manufacturers in the United States have shipped tons of goods to Florida. All these, as well as the cost of transportation, have been contributed to the Red Cross, officials here said. They insist that no Government funds or supplies are involved in the exchange.

The Red Cross said last night that it has more than \$11 million in supplies already loaded on the African Pilot

and on the Pan American World Airways planes that will carry supplies to Havana and prisoners back to Miami.

"Speed is essential in making the delivery of supplies," Gen. Alfred M. Gruenther, president of the Red Cross, said. "We are doing all possible to ensure that the prisoners will be back among loved ones by Christmas."

Agency Care Planned

The Department of Health, Education and Welfare and other Government agencies

are planning to receive and care for the prisoners once they land in Miami. Reports from Cuba indicate many of the prisoners are seriously ill and desperately in need of medical care.

Red Cross officials have called the operation the largest it has ever undertaken in terms of relief supplies being handled to meet human suffering. In terms of supplies, its largest previous "single" operation involved \$18 million in the aftermath of floods in the Northeast in 1956.

As of late yesterday, more than 700,000 pounds of supplies had been flown to Florida by 10 major airlines. Much more was on its way via railroads and trucks.

There was no breakdown immediately available of what is in the \$53-million-dollar package. It was understood to contain more than \$20 million in food, much of it for babies, and more than \$20 million in drugs and other medicines. The balance is made up of medical and surgical equipment.