

YEMEN RELEASES JAILED AMERICANS

2 Aid Officials, Accused of Sabotage, Fly to Ethiopia

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WASHINGTON, May 17 — Two American aid officials detained in Yemen for three weeks on accusations of sabotage have been permitted to leave the country and have landed in Ethiopia, the State Department reported today.

State Department officials said that the two men, Stephen Liapis, 33 years old, of Grand Forks, N. D., and Harold Hartman, 37, of Baltimore, Md., had been flown to Asmara, Ethiopia, aboard a regularly scheduled Yemen airline company flight.

They were escorted by Richard Parker, political counselor of the American Embassy in Cairo, who flew to Yemen several days ago with three other American diplomats to arrange for their release.

The State Department welcomed their release through its spokesman, Robert J. McCloskey, adding that their detention had been a "most unfortunate episode" in American-Egyptian relations.

State Department officials said that their arrest had been "totally unwarranted" and that both were innocent of Yemeni accusations that they had fired a bazooka at an Egyptian army ammunition dump in the provincial city of Taiz on April 25.

The arrest of seven American aid employes—five released previously—and a mob attack on the American aid mission in Taiz, causing an estimated \$1-million in damage, brought American relations with the pro-Cairo Yemen Republic near the breaking point.

Trial Date Was Never Set

The Government radio in Yemen said that Mr. Liapis and Mr. Hartman would be tried by a security court and, if convicted, would face a death penalty. But United States officials said that the Yemeni Government indictment against the two Americans had been couched in general terms. No date was ever set for a trial.

The two men were released from jail yesterday on \$1,000 bond each posted by the American Embassy in Sana, Yemen. They were flown out of the country today under the personal instructions of President Abdullah al-Salal. Egyptian officials who have an overriding influence in Yemen, were reported to have helped arrange their release and departure.

Officials said that there was no indication that the Yemeni indictment had been dropped or that the United States had asked for the return of the bail. They said that Washington considered the matter closed.



Associated Press

ANNOUNCED RELEASE:
Robert J. McCloskey, the
State Department official.