

2 Problems Seen in Saigon Buildup

By Peter Branstrop

Washington Post Foreign Service

SAIGON, March 11.—Adding 125,000 men to South Vietnam's 685,000-man regular forces and militia—as President Thieu has proposed—would create supply problems and strain training facilities, U.S. sources said today.

Providing American arms equipment for the new troops would be a major problem, they said.

The South Vietnamese are already complaining of a U.S. lag in re-equipping the present ARVN forces with the automatic M-16 rifle and M-60 machine-gun to match the Communists' new 7.62mm automatic weapons.

The majority of ARVN regulars and militia are still equipped with slow-firing World War II-vintage U.S. M-1 rifles and carbines. The elite units, such as the airborne battalions, and troops stationed in the I Corps, close to the Demilitarized Zone, have received M-16s. (Most U.S. combat units in Vietnam got M-16s last year.)

Training Centers Destroyed

Even a gradual troop increase would strain South Vietnamese training facilities, the sources said. During the Communist Tet offensive, two of nine basic-training centers were destroyed or damaged. Only eight of 37 Popular Forces militia schools are back in operation, and six of ten divisional training camps are still not functioning.

A considerable troop increase—85,000 men—has already been programmed for this calendar year. About 15,000 men will go to the regular ARVN unit and the rest will beef up local security with the



WHY PERSONNEL CARRIERS ARE ARMORED—A Vietcong grenade explodes against a machine-gun shield as

U.S. Americal Division makes sweep near Tamky, about 25 miles south of DaNang. No one was seriously wounded.

Associated Press

Regional Force and Popular Force militia.

Even this growth, sources said, would not have been possible under the easy-going draft and recruiting system used before the lunar new year. Since the Vietcong attacks Jan. 31, however, the Thieu government has begun to sweep up new manpower.

It has called up all reservists who served less than five years on active duty and who are under age 33.

The monthly draft quota has been raised from 3000 to 4000 and is being filled.

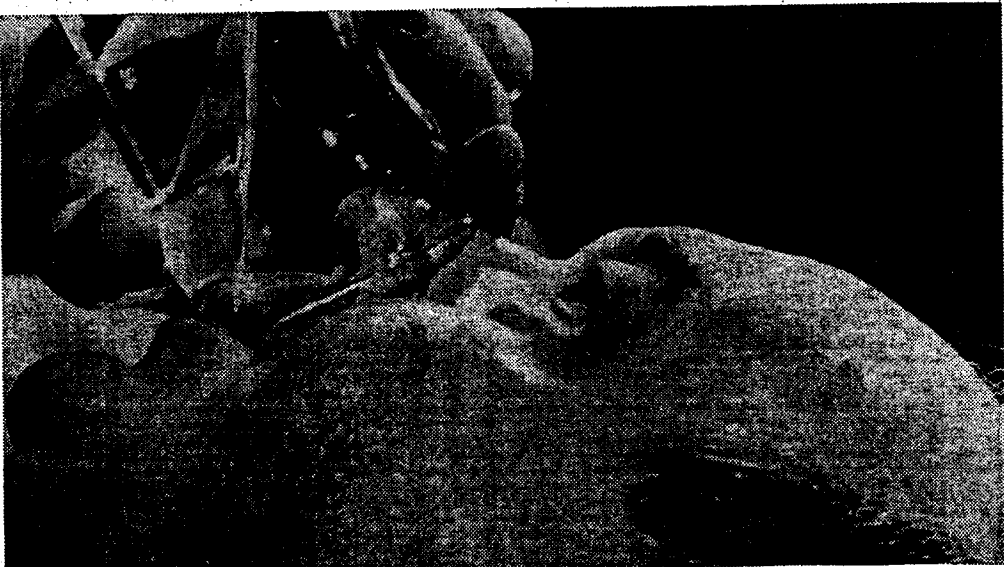
After an amnesty was extended to draft dodgers who dropped in, about 10,600 draftees were inducted last month.

Do Legislative Protests

Controversial before Tet, a law making 18-and 19-year-olds eligible for the draft has now been put into effect with-

out any outcry from parliament. All 19-year-olds are scheduled for induction by April 1. The 18-year-olds will follow.

Deferrals for university students—long favored—and other privileged groups are being screened anew. More manpower is needed by the South Vietnamese government—as by the Vietcong—just to provide replacements for Tet offensive losses, Vietnamese sources said. The ARVN lost almost 10,000 casualties, including 4000 dead, last month. Casualties in the stepped up war are expected to continue being high.



As Senators press Secretary of State Rusk on Vietnam policies, the Secretary reflects confidence, attentiveness, then wary listening as he takes a brief respite for a drink of water.

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