

Many U.S. Civilian Roles In Asia May Go to Military

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WASHINGTON, June 9—The Nixon Administration is drawing up plans for the shift of numerous American economic and social programs in South Vietnam and Laos

from civilian to military control.

Under the plans the United States Defense Department would gradually take over, wholly or in part, the financing and operation of such programs as the balancing of the South Vietnamese defense budget, pacification of rural areas, public health, the training of the police and the care of refugees.

Those programs are financed and administered alone or in cooperation with the Defense Department by the Agency for International Development. In many instances the Central Intelligence Agency and the United States Information Agency also participate.

During the fiscal year ending on June 30, the aid agency, it is estimated, will have spent \$365-million in Vietnam.

The Administration plans to incorporate some of the changes in its revision of the foreign-aid program, which is expected soon. Part of the program will require Congressional approval.

The plans are expected to generate considerable controversy in and out of Congress because they deal with the subject of civilian vs. military control of policy. The contemplated shift could transfer the responsibility of Senate review from the Foreign Relations Committee, which has generally been critical of American operations in Southeast Asia, to the Armed Services Committee, which has generally been sympathetic.

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increasingly assigned to positions of responsibility in the administration of wartime and postwar programs.

A major argument among Administration officials favoring an increase in the military role in Asian and other support-assistance programs is said to be that the Defense Department is expected to have an easier time getting funds from Congress, where opposition to foreign-aid appropriation has been growing in recent years.

Indications are that the new approach has support in the White House staff as well as among many though not all civilian and military officials in the Defense Department. Top officials in the aid agency are described as resigned to the change, partly because A.I.D. as an entity would disappear under the projected reorganization of the foreign-aid program.

Secretary of State William P. Rogers has participated in the discussions only to a limited extent. The whole question is expected to be reviewed by the National Security Council.

Dr. John A. Hannah, the aid administrator, discussed the problem with President Nixon at the White House May 25 in one of their rare meetings.

In recent public statements Dr. Hannah has made it clear that the "support assistance" programs would be divested from the agency that would be set up to handle overseas economic development under the reorganization, expected to take effect in about a year. He has recognized that some of the support functions would be turned over to the Defense Department.

Other aid officials foresaw a tug-of-war between the Pentagon and civilian agencies over the extent to which the military establishment would assume responsibility for the activities now performed by the aid agency.

They said that the State Department, which is to coordinate the support assistance under the reorganization blueprint, does not have "enough clout," funds or experienced personnel to run the programs.

Larger C.I.A. Role Foreseen

The officials also foresaw that the C.I.A. would seek to increase its role in the support programs. They noted that in a radio interview last Sunday Dr. Hannah conceded that the intelligence agency had been using A.I.D. as a cover for its activities in Laos since 1962. In Vietnam, the C.I.A. is an active partner in the pacification program, which it created eight years ago, and is engaged in many other operations.

While there is resistance among civilian officials to what is viewed as military encroachment, A.I.D. recognizes its inability to obtain sufficient funds and personnel to finance and operate some programs in Vietnam.

Early this year, for example, the United States Ambassador to South Vietnam, Ellsworth Bunker, turned down insistent proposals from the United States Military Assistance Command in Saigon that he accept 135 Army officers as advisers to the aid agency's public-safety program, which seeks to build up the South Vietnamese civilian police.

The Defense Department plans to finance several projects that have been administered and funded by the aid agency, among them the supply of high-protein food to the South Vietnamese Army. Tentative estimates are that in fiscal 1971 the Defense Department will finance up to \$50-million in programs that previously were paid for from aid funds.

In many recent situations, officials said, A.I.D. had to turn to the military for administrators and physicians to run refugee and public-health projects because of a shortage of civilians willing to serve in Vietnam.

Rapidly Growing Ability

Such developments indicate the rapidly growing capability of the military, especially the Army, to administer typically civilian programs.

This month the newly reorganized John F. Kennedy Center for Military Assistance at Fort Bragg, N. C.—originally established by the Army to teach antiguerrilla warfare—will graduate the first class of Army officers trained in the political, social, economic, cultural and linguistic aspects of overseas military activities.

Commenting on the trend, a civilian official said that "the realities of the situation" would increasingly force the Administration to turn to the military for the financing and management of certain programs because of the inability of civilian agencies to muster adequate funds and personnel.

The major institutional changes are expected to come in the message that President Nixon will send to Congress later this month.

Deriving from the report of the task force on international development headed by Rudolph A. Peterson, retired president of the Bank of America, the Presidential message is expected to recommend a clear separation of international economic-development assistance from military and support aid. It is the latter that, in situations like Vietnam, has been administered by A.I.D. while the Pentagon has handled military sales and grants.

The Peterson report call for

a law covering both military assistance and support assistance, and for an agency on international security cooperation in the State Department that would supersede the present aid agency. The law would vest in the State Department the direction and coordination of the security-assistance program.

While the Defense Department would control military assistance, the State Department, under the Peterson recommendations, would be responsible for support-assistance and public-safety programs.

Senior Administration officials said that it appeared inevitable that considerable responsibility for the support programs would

be shifted to the Pentagon even if, in theory, the State Department retained over-all policy direction.

Officials discussing the situation are convinced that the Pentagon financing will be followed by insistence that projects be increasingly administered by the military.

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