

# Ellsberg's Viet Friend Not Called

## Los Angeles

A former South Vietnamese diplomat flown here from West Africa to be a star defense witness in the Pentagon Papers trial left town yesterday without giving a word of testimony.

Vu Van Thai, once Saigon's ambassador to Washington and now an official of the United Nations development program in Dakar, Senegal, had been secretly scheduled as a witness for Daniel Ellsberg and Anthony J. Russo Jr., who are charged with conspiracy, espionage and theft of government property in connection with disclosure of the top-secret documents.

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Thai's testimony was expected to provoke a good deal of sensation, since he is named as a coconspirator—but not formally charged with any crime—in the indictment against Ellsberg and Russo.

The government contends that he was present, and had illegal access to at least one volume of the Pentagon Papers, while the defendants duplicated the documents at a Hollywood advertising agency in October 1969.

After extensive discussions with Thai — a longtime friend and confidant of Ellsberg from the days when they were both working at Rand Corp. in nearby Santa Monica — the defense decided that his appearance as a witness could pose serious risks to its case.

It was feared, for example, that his testimony would serve only to highlight the theft charges against Ellsberg and Russo, generally regarded as the strongest part of the government's case.

*Washington Post Service*