

Saigon GIs To Get U.S. Housing Aid

New York Times

Saigon

President Nixon has promised the South Vietnamese government \$100 million to build badly needed housing for its soldiers and their families, President Nguyen Van Thieu disclosed yesterday.

The special aid program will also include 41,300 tons of canned food for South Vietnamese fighting men, according to the official report.

The commitments were contained in a personal letter from Mr. Nixon to Thieu, which secretary of state William P. Rogers delivered to the South Vietnamese president.

The letter was in response to a South Vietnamese request, presented to the United States military command last December, for military food and housing aid.

Thieu originally requested \$212 million to build 202,000 dwellings for South Vietnamese soldiers and veterans.

The canned goods will consist primarily of high-protein foods such as meat and fish.

The South Vietnamese president made the original

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request on the ground that additional aid was needed to offset the rising cost to Saigon of the Vietnamization program, under which South Vietnamese forces are being trained to take over the burden of the war as United States troops are withdrawn.

POLITICAL

Although Thieu did not win his entire housing request, Mr. Nixon's aid commitment represents an important political victory for the South Vietnamese president.

The new housing will above all relieve — at least partially — a critical shortage of dwellings for South Vietnamese soldiers and their families that has caused a drop in army morale so serious, some Vietnamese officials

have conceded privately, that it could lead to violence unless the housing situation is improved.

DISABLED

Just such violence has erupted in Saigon's streets during the past two months by disabled war veterans, who have pressed their demand for housing with demonstrations and by building shanties on private and government property.

The president's letter does not specify whether veterans will be included in the new housing but it will presumably make room for former soldiers in existing housing vacated by regular troops as the construction progresses.

Active soldiers and veterans also constitute the country's largest single voting bloc.