

U.S. to Help Saigon on Troops' Housing

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SAIGON, South Vietnam, July 7—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 today.

The special aid program will also include 47,300 tons of canned food for South Vietnamese fighting men, according to an official report.

The new United States aid commitments were contained in a letter from President Nixon to President Thieu, which was delivered by Secretary of State William Rogers. Mr. Rogers was in Saigon to attend a meeting of allied foreign ministers.

Although the promised housing aid was short of President Thieu's request, the new American commitment represents an important political victory for the South Vietnamese President.

Housing Shortage Critical

The new housing bill will relieve—at least partly—a critical shortage of dwellings for South Vietnamese soldiers and their families. This 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 was improved.

Just such violence by disabled veterans has erupted in Saigon's streets during the last two months. The veterans have pressed their demand for housing with demonstrations and by building shanties on government property. Mr. Nixon's letter does not specify whether the new housing will also accommodate veterans but presumably they will benefit as exist-

ing premises are vacated by regular troops.

The Nixon letter was in response to a South Vietnamese request, presented to the United States military command last December, for aid to provide food and housing for the military. A summary of the letter was read over the national radio and television here this evening.

According to an unofficial translation, the Government statement said:

"President Nixon has confirmed the approval of this aid

FOE SAID TO LEAVE KEY LAOTIAN PLAIN

VIENTIANE, Laos, July 7 (Agence France-Presse)—North Vietnamese troops are reported to be withdrawing from the Plaine des Jarres and its hill rims to the north and south and toward North Vietnam to the east.

Laotian Government officials decline to comment on the significance of the troop movement from the area in northern Laos, which the Communists occupied last fall. But Western military sources express the view that those who have moved westward have done so to wait in northeastern Laos for the rainy season to end.

These sources add that North Vietnamese troops remain close to the Special Forces base of Sam Thong, 15 miles southwest of the plain.

The withdrawals are also reported by prisoners. In addition, Laotian and United States aircraft can now fly over the entire area without drawing fire whereas until recently flights touched off strong antiaircraft

program, which will consist of the whole food aid program as requested and a building program of providing materials for the construction of 100,000 housing units to be completed within five years at a total estimated cost of about \$100-million."

\$212-Million Asked

In his original request President Thieu had asked for \$212-million to build 202,000 dwellings for soldiers and veterans.

The canned goods will consist primarily of high-protein foods such as meat and fish, but will also include some cooking oil. The 47,300 tons promised by President Nixon represents Mr. Thieu's entire request.

President Thieu made the original request on the ground that additional aid was needed to offset the rising costs to the Saigon Government 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. The United States withdrawals have meant not only greater expenses for the Saigon Government, South Vietnamese officials have been arguing here lately, but have also reduced the amount of money poured into the local economy to support United States troops stationed here.

Active soldiers and veterans constitute the country's largest single voting bloc, and the good feeling President Thieu will gain from today's announcement can be expected to result in votes from this group when he runs for re-election next year.

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