



Associated Press

HITCHHIKER arriving in Khesanh, South Vietnam, on skid of helicopter returning from base in Laos with wounded South Vietnamese. He had jumped onto copter as it took off.

Funds Said to Be Key to G.I. Pullout Rate

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Special to The New York Times

SAIGON, South Vietnam, March 17—The United States command has told Washington that a lack of money for the Vietnam war has been more crucial in determining the rate of troop withdrawals than has the progress of Vietnamization or what the enemy does on the battlefield.

A document prepared by the Military Assistance Command that summarizes activities for 1970 states that "the size and timing of redeployments were no longer based solely on Vietnamization"—the training and equipping of the South Viet-

namese forces to assume the burden of the war.

"Imposed budget and manpower constraints largely determined redeployments," the document adds.

President Nixon has said that the withdrawal rate is based on three considerations: the progress of the Vietnamese in taking over the fight, the enemy's actions and the progress of the Paris peace talks.

A copy of the document was obtained by The New York Times from American military sources. Although some sections bore only the marking "confidential"—the Army's lowest classification of secrecy

—the parts dealing with the withdrawal rate were stamped "top secret" at the top and bottom of each page.

The document, in its summary of the command's reports to Washington, appears to add a new dimension to the factors determining the withdrawal rate.

The Administration has pointed with pride to the savings it has made by pulling American troops out of the war zone, but it has never said that such economies had become a guiding principle in

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determining the withdrawal schedule.

According to the document, it appeared to Gen. Creighton W. Abrams, the United States commander, that "the single remaining criterion for redeployment sizes and timing was to be governed only by the budget, and that progress in Vietnamization was no longer applicable."

Alternatives on Timing

After a short summary of three alternative withdrawal schedules presented by the Joint Chiefs of Staff for General Abrams' recommendations, the document adds that the command proposed that the South Vietnamese Government "be informed as soon as possible that redeployment planning would no longer be based upon Vietnamization progress."

A military source who is familiar with the document but who had no hand in writing it explained: "It means that the Joint Chiefs told Abrams that the pullouts should be based on three things — enemy activity, Vietnamization and the budget limitations. Abrams replied that money is so short that the first two criteria cannot be considered."

No mention of the Paris peace talks is made in the document though that is Mr. Nixon's third declared standard on which the withdrawal rate would be based.

The military source described the document, which bore no title or date in the sections obtained by The Times, as "a kind of official yearbook." He added that it was the American command's "side of the story of what happened last year."

In view of dates in the nar-

rative, the command's report that the shortage of money had superseded other considerations in determining troops withdrawals was made to Washington in August.

Existing Commitments

In October, the narrative says, the Joint Chiefs requested an appraisal of the effect that the shortage of funds and the troop withdrawals then scheduled would have on "existing commitments."

In summarizing General Abrams' reply, the document says: "While no reliable measurements of the impact could be made, it was evident that fund and manpower reductions coupled with increased support requirements would adversely affect mission capabilities.

"Support requirements" refers to the United States Army's obligation to provide equipment and battlefield support to the South Vietnamese.

Withdrawals under way this year are not mentioned, nor is there any detail on Washington's responses to the command's warnings.

The President, who is expected to disclose the next pullout schedule next month, has already said that 284,000 troops would be left in Vietnam by May 1. There are 317,000 now.

Laird Assesses Future

Looking farther into the future, Secretary of Defense Melvin R. Laird indicated in a television interview yesterday that by the end of next year there would be fewer than 50,000 American soldiers in Vietnam.

The American command's document says that in another report to Washington it considered a force of 260,000 by the end of the 1971 fiscal year

"a realistic planning objective." They would be used, the document says, to protect United States personnel and facilities, support Vietnamese operations and engage in limited offensives in emergencies.

That prediction, in other words, would be consistent with the Administration's hints that the United States combat role is to be largely ended by summer.

In a related area, the document discloses that the command has tentatively recommended that over 43,000 American servicemen be provided to run an advisory mission after the United States combat role is ended and the present command is dissolved.

Under the plan, 6,130 advisers would be assigned to the South Vietnamese Army and 18,975 officers and men would make up the advisory group. The remaining 18,000 men were listed as "supplemental requirements." It was not made clear what their functions would be, but military sources speculated that they would be assigned to warehouse, transportation, maintenance and other support duties.