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## U.S. ADMITS IT HIT FOE'S HOSPITALS

### Pentagon Says Installations Did Not Have Markings

Special to The New York Times

WASHINGTON, May 3—The Defense Department acknowledged today that allied forces in South Vietnam had destroyed enemy hospitals, but it contended that such actions had occurred because these installations were not marked.

"These instances occur," the Pentagon said, "when an ordinary tunnel, bunker or structure comes under attack and is subsequently searched by a ground force and found to contain some type of medical facility."

Identification of the hospitals was possible "only after the fact," the Pentagon continued, "because the Vietcong has chosen not to mark medical facilities with distinctive insignia."

The statement by the Defense Department was in reply to a variety of war crimes allegations made in 41 books, reports and other documents that were summarized by Neil Sheehan in The New York Times Book Review last March 28. Mr. Sheehan is a correspondent of The Times in Washington.

#### Withholding of Aid Denied

In its reply to written questions, the Pentagon denied categorically allegations that American and South Vietnamese troops had withheld medical aid from civilians. Such aid, it contended, constituted one of their "finest achievements."

The department also asserted that the United States and its allies had tried to hold down civilian casualties by "scrupulously" avoiding air strikes and artillery bombardments "beyond that degree which is necessary for military purposes," as laid down in the rules of war.

Such strikes and bombardments, the Pentagon said, have been made "only after detailed target information has been obtained and specific targets identified, checked and cleared."

This care, it went on, has been extended to systematic efforts "to attack the insurgent and separate him from the population. It is wholly erroneous, the department said, to allege that the United States has sought to kill "masses of the population because they may, at some time, provide support for the enemy."

The Pentagon said that Americans had resettled some civilians in areas where they could be better protected. It cited specifically the evacuation of civilians from the U Minh Forest in the Mekong Delta before it was bombed by B-52's.

The department also pointed to a change in American policy regarding civilians in areas where crop delinquents were to be used.

"Very early in the crop destruction program," it said, "an effort was made to induce the people to leave enemy-held areas so they would not have to or be able to provide food, recruits and supplies to the enemy forces."

This method was discontinued later, the statement asserted, even though it did increase the enemy's supply and manpower problems and enable some Vietnamese to reach Government protection. Instead, the Pentagon said, a "more specific and selective effort was made to prevent the Vietcong from growing rice in remote and isolated areas."

#### Medical Actions Defended

In denying the allegation that allied forces had failed to care for sick and wounded civilians, the Pentagon said that "the medical effort represents one of the finest achievements of the United States Government and of the other governments of nations with forces in South Vietnam."

It said statistics showed that 21,275 war-related injuries were treated in American hospitals and 234,340 in South Vietnamese hospitals between 1967 and 1970.

The Pentagon said that it was impossible to tell how many of these injuries were caused by allied action and many by Vietcong or North Vietnamese forces.