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Humanitarian Aid Barely Tapped

By George C. Wilson
Washington Post Staff Writer

The Ford administration in the first half of this fiscal year has used little of the money Congress authorized for humanitarian assistance to South Vietnam.

Agency for International Development figures also show that the administration opted for cutting deeper into humanitarian assistance than other categories of aid in absorbing congressional reductions in money for Vietnam.

Members of Congress are expected to cite those and other administration actions in replying to Mr. Ford's complaint Thursday that "unfortunately" Congress had cut his request for humanitarian assistance to Vietnam from \$135 million to \$55 million.

A rundown of the executive and legislative actions concerning humanitarian assistance for South Vietnam for fiscal 1975:

- The Ford administration

asked Congress for \$135 million as part of its request for \$750 million for postwar reconstruction of South Vietnam.

- Congress authorized \$90 million for humanitarian assistance in reducing the Vietnam reconstruction request from \$750 million to \$449.9 million.

- Congress appropriated \$282 million without setting a new limit on how much of this reconstruction money for Vietnam could go for humanitarian assistance.

- The Ford administration, in absorbing the congressional cuts, decided to allocate \$55.7 million for humanitarian assistance—\$34.3 million below the \$90 million Congress authorized.

The Ford administration's reduction in humanitarian assistance was the deepest cut made in any of the South Vietnamese reconstruction accounts.

In comparison, the administration said it would reduce agricultural assistance from \$154.5 million to \$10.4 million; industrial develop-

ment from \$139.8 million to \$78 million, and miscellaneous assistance from \$65.6 million to \$44.9 million.

AID figures for the first half of this fiscal year—July 1, 1974 through Dec. 31, 1974—show that the Ford administration had obligated \$8.29 million for humanitarian assistance.

Compared with the \$90 million Congress had authorized for the full year, this comes out to less than 10 per cent of the total.

Compared with the money that would have been available if AID had wished to parcel out the money evenly on a quarterly basis, the \$8.29 million is about 18 per cent of the \$45 million that would have been available for the six-month period.

AID may have intended to obligate humanitarian assistance more fully in the second half of fiscal 1975 and stay within the administration's planned level of \$55.7 million.

Congress has been pushing the Ford administration to favor immediate help for

the Vietnamese people over long-term development projects in deciding where to spend the reconstruction money.

For example, in the Senate Appropriations Committee report on foreign aid this year the committee urged AID "to give highest priority to refugee and humanitarian assistance through what we have described as people-level programs."

Meanwhile, it was announced that the Senate Judiciary Subcommittee on Refugees will begin hearing Tuesday on the refugee problems in South Vietnam. Subcommittee chairman Edward M. Kennedy (D-Mass.) said in a statement the subcommittee will review current U.S. policy in Indochina with regard to refugees.

Philip Habib, assistant secretary of state for East Asian and Pacific affairs, and Daniel Parker, head of the Agency for International Development, are to be the chief witnesses.