

Vietnam Killings Reported

By Don Oberdorfer
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Sen. George McGovern (D-S.D.) reported yesterday that "a few . . . top war criminals, as they called them," have been executed by Communist authorities in Vietnam since the fall of Saigon last spring.

Just back from a five-day trip to Hanoi and Saigon, McGovern said he received the information from officials of the Vietnamese regime. He was unable to obtain names or specific numbers of persons killed, but said there is "no evidence or undercurrent that large numbers of people have been put to death."

U.S. government sources said they know of no announcement from Saigon or Hanoi that "war criminals" have been tried or executed. Many civil and military leaders of the Thieu regime left Vietnam at the time of Saigon's fall, though some were stranded or chose to remain.

The first American political figure to visit Saigon since its fall in April, McGovern described the city as seemingly normal and its people as better off under the present government than they were before.

"All shops seemed to be flourishing . . . Bars are open. The streets are filled with busy people. Dress is about the same," said McGovern, who spent two days traveling by car in Saigon and talking with officials.

He stayed in the former British ambassador's residence, now a guest house, and visited the empty six-story U.S. embassy chancery,

outside of which Vietnamese soldiers on guard duty had hung their washing.

McGovern said he was told that "a large number" of people are in jail on grounds of being a threat to the new regime, though no specific number was supplied.

About 50 Americans are believed still in South Vietnam, some of whom would like to leave. McGovern quoted Madame Nguyen Thi Binh, foreign minister for the Provisional Revolutionary Government, as pledging to accelerate departure arrangements for Americans or their dependents. Two Americans were given permission to leave at his request during his visit, McGovern said.

The 1972 Democratic presidential nominee, a leading opponent of the Vietnam war, said Vietnamese in the north and south seemed eager for peaceful relations with the United States. McGovern urged that normalization of relations take place without undue delay, perhaps after the U.S. presidential election in November and the Vietnamese elections scheduled for this year to establish a single government.

President Ford and Secretary of State Henry A. Kissinger have said that future policy toward Vietnam will be determined by the Vietnamese government's conduct toward the United States—particularly the return of remains of Americans killed in Vietnam or information about them and others missing in action.

U.S. officials were engaged in low-level talks with Vietnamese diplomats in Paris on this subject last July and August, according to reliable sources. But the Vietnamese are reported to have terminated those talks after the United States vetoed the entry of North and South Vietnam to the United Nations.