

# House Panel Urges U.S. to Investigate 'Tiger Cage' Cells

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WASHINGTON, July 13—

A House watchdog committee today demanded a prompt and thorough Federal investigation of conditions at South Vietnam's Con Son Prison, where "tiger-cage imprisonment and savage mistreatment of human beings" was recently charged by two Representatives who visited the scene.

The two Representatives — Augustus F. Hawkins, Democrat of California, and William R. Anderson, Democrat of Tennessee—offered a resolution today that on the House and Senate to "condemn the cruel and inhumane treatment" of political prisoners in South Vietnam and urging the President to demand that the Saigon Government take immediate corrective action.

The Con Son Prison situation came up during the testimony of Robert H. Nooter,

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er, assistant administrator of the Agency for International Development, before a subcommittee of the House Committee on Government Operations.

In response to questions from Representative John E. Moss, Democrat of California, and Representative Frank Horton, Republican of New York, the witness said that the Saigon Government was investigating conditions at the prison on Con Son, an island 60 miles off the coast of South Vietnam.

"I strongly urge that we become deeply and promptly involved," Mr. Moss, the subcommittee chairman said. "To rely on a government that has condoned these practices is leaning on a rather weak reed. This is not just a matter of interest to the South Vietnam Government. It could easily affect the way in which North Vietnam treats American prisoners of war."

Representatives Hawkins and Anderson are members of a House select committee on United States involvement in Southeast Asia. They brought the Con Son Prison situation to public attention last week in a report to the House.

They reported that about 500 men, women and children were held in the "tiger cage" cells at Con Son. They said that the prisoners were shackled to iron bars, and sometimes became paralyzed.

## 'Cover-Up' Denied

Mr. Nooter told the subcommittee that he had no personal knowledge of the use of the tiger cages, which are cement blocks open at the top except for iron bars and built by the French Government 75 years ago. But he said that A.I.D. officials in Saigon had denied any "cover-up" of information about the cells.

A subcommittee staff member, Norman Cornish, told Mr. Nooter that the panel had information that officials of the agency's public safety program in Saigon had seen the "Tiger cages" in the past and had done nothing about them.

"Obviously," he said, "the information was never passed on to Washington or you would have known about it."

Under the public safety program of A.I.D., civilian police are trained in modern riot methods and modern detention methods.

## Role for Aide Opposed

Mr. Moss insisted that the A.I.D. investigation of Con Son should not be conducted by Frank E. Walton, head of the agency's public safety program in South Vietnam. He said Mr. Walton had demonstrated his "bias" in objecting to the inspection of the "tiger cages" by Representatives Hawkins and Anderson.

Chairman Moss directed that all civil prisons in South Vietnam be included in the Con Son investigation and that a separate Defense Department inquiry be made into conditions of prisoner-of-war camps and military prisons.

Representatives Hawkins and Anderson both sent long personal letters to President Nixon urging his support for the corrective action demanded in the concurrent resolution and requesting him to send separate task forces to South Vietnam within 48 hours to "prevent further degradation and death" of prisoners in retaliation against those who talked to them about prison conditions.

Mr. Anderson urged the President to call for these steps:

¶"An immediate investigation of the ambassadorial staff in South Vietnam to determine how the conditions now existing in Con Son prison could have escaped their attention and their demands for corrective action."

¶"An investigation of the

Agency for International Development in South Vietnam to determine why and how United States dollars have been used to support a prison system that can produce conditions as revolting as those in Con Son."

## No Red Cross Charges Reported

Special to The New York Times

GENEVA, July 13—Le Van Loi, South Vietnam's representative to the international organizations in Geneva, said tonight that a Red Cross report last February on conditions in the Con Son Prison had contained no "damaging" allegations against his Government.

The report, he said, was submitted to him here so that he could forward it to Saigon.

A high Red Cross source said that he was positive that the United States Government had received a copy of the report at the same time. He declined, however, to reveal the channels used.

Mr. Van Loi said that he could not reveal the nature of the report or whether it confirmed reports of the conditions in the "tiger cage" cells in the prison.

## Saigon Completes Investigation

SAIGON, South Vietnam, July 13 (Reuters)—Two South Vietnamese Government teams have completed investigations into the treatment of prisoners in the "tiger cage" punishment cells of Con Son Prison, a Government spokesman said today. He said that both groups would report soon to Premier Tran Thien Khiem.