

'Tiger Cage' Report**Saigon Acts to Discredit Writer**

By Michael Morrow
Chronicle Foreign Service

Saigon

Don Luce, instrumental figure in the revelation of South Vietnam's "tiger cages" last July, has been denied re-accreditation as a journalist by the Saigon government.

Sources close to Saigon's press center director confirmed Luce's guiding U.S. Congressmen to Con Son Island prison, site of the tiger cages, was instrumental in the decision.

Luce, who has been accredited to the World Council of Churches' Ecumenical Press Service, was refused re-accreditation by Nguyen Ngoc Huyen, director of the Republic of Vietnam's Press Center, on October 13.

According to Luce, Huyen refused to give a reason for not re-accrediting him.

APPEAL

On October 14 Luce wrote Huyen a letter asking for reconsideration. The letter has not been answered.

Luce went to Huyen's office on October 20 to keep a pre-arranged appointment. Huyen was out. Returning later, Luce found Huyen too busy to see him.

On October 22 Luce delivered a letter of sponsorship for free-lance affiliation with the National Broadcasting Company signed by NBC's Saigon bureau manager, George L. Allison. This letter stated, "We are familiar with Luce's work, and it meets our editorial standards." Re-accreditation was still refused.

Arthur Dommen, president of the Association of Foreign Correspondents, in Vietnam, met with Huyen October 27. Huyen told him the main reason for withdrawing Luce's press card was the Con Son story.

REGRET

In his meeting with Huyen, Dommen expressed regret a foreign correspondent with proper credentials from his home office was being refused accreditation without being given any reason. Huyen said the case was still being considered.

Sources close to Huyen said the decision not to re-accredit Luce was made at higher levels as a result of Luce's involvement in the exposure of the Con Son Island tiger cages.

Luce sparked a world uproar when he guided U.S. Congressmen William Anderson (Dem-Tenn) and Augustus Hawkins (Dem-Calif) to the "tiger cages" as a member of their party which visited Con Son Island prison July 2. He knew the exact location of the "tiger cages" from maps prepared for him by Vietnamese contacts.

"For a long time Luce has been writing unfavorably about our internal political situation and distorting the facts," the source said. "There has been pressure (on Huyen) for more than two years from higher officials here and abroad to take away his accreditation and expel him."

According to the same source, only Huyen's intervention prevented Luce's expulsion following exposure of the tiger cages. The source said pressure for expulsion dates to two years ago when Luce did a story on bad conditions in a Saigon detention center for children.

The source said no reporters have been expelled or denied re-accreditation prior to Luce during Huyen's three-year tenure as director of the Press Center.

Before then, it was not an infrequent occurrence.

REASON

Luce said, "I believe that the refusal to renew my press card is because of disagreement with the contents of the stories I have written. Specifically, the Con Son tiger cage story was an embarrassment to the Vietnamese government and they do not want other stories like this.

"Secondly, I believe it is the first in a series of moves to kick me out of Vietnam. The government has become increasingly tough on visa requirements with the purpose of keeping people opposed to the present government out of the country.

"It is difficult to kick a journalist out because of the bad international press coverage which this generates. The simplest thing, then, is to take my press card away now and then refuse to extend my visa which expires February 14, 1971," Luce said.

INVESTIGATIONS

Luce also said he had been investigated by various intelligence agencies in Vietnam.

According to Luce, several Americans here have been questioned privately by American officials on his possible "direct contacts with the NLF."

Luce said he had also been followed many times during the past few months, that his office had shown signs of being searched on one occasion, and that American officials had attempted to discredit him with the Vietnamese by intimating privately he had connections with the CIA.

One American with a Protestant social-work agency said he had been questioned by American officials on whether or not Luce had connections with the NLF.

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