

## Letter to Nixon

# U.S. Volunteers In Laos Protest

### Saigon

Twenty-one members of a private volunteer group working in Laos have sent a letter to President Nixon protesting the South Vietnamese invasion of Laos and U.S. bombing and other military activities there.

The letter was sent to Mr. Nixon by members of International Voluntary Services, which has 36 members working in agriculture, education and social welfare projects in Laos. A copy of the letter, dated March 15, was released in Saigon yesterday.

The members told Mr. Nixon they were "deeply distressed" by U.S. support for the South Vietnamese drive to cut the Ho Chi Minh Trail. They disputed Mr. Nixon's assertion that it would shorten the war and save U.S. lives.

### PRIVATE

The International Voluntary Services is a private, non-profit organization formed in 1953 to provide young people to work abroad in rural development

projects in Asia, Africa and Latin America. It is an American organization, financed by private donations.

Those who signed the protest were all Americans, though organization now involves volunteers of many different nationalities. The organization has about 200 members — 80 of whom are in Vietnam.

The volunteers said that through work with Lao refugees they had learned of the effects of U.S. bombing, which they said is causing the "systematic destruction . . . of the human basis for a society."

Many civilians have been killed and maimed by anti-personnel bombs and the people have been forced to flee their home areas for resettlement villages, they said.

### INVASION

The South Vietnamese invasion, the protest said, "has upset a delicate status quo and expanded the fighting once more into populated areas west of the invaded territory, as well as aggra-

vating already serious fighting elsewhere within Laos."

The letter said the protesters recognized that "ours is not the only violence against these people," adding: "We condemn also the destruction and killing brought by the North Vietnamese.

"But we do not believe that their presence in Laos, nor the presence of an indigenous Communist movement, justifies U.S. military activity against an entire society."

*Associated Press*