

'Weather Warfare' Charged in Vietnam

By Victor Cohn 3/9/73
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The United States "at least in an experimental way" waged weather war in Indochina, a prominent scientist who was until last year a member of President Nixon's Council on Environmental Quality said yesterday.

Speaking for the 4,500-member Federation of American Scientists, Dr. Gordon J. F. MacDonald called on President Nixon to "disclose the facts" on such acts "under this or previous administrations." He was joined by Herbert Scoville, a government official during the Kennedy and Johnson administrations.

They also urged Mr. Nixon to seek an international agreement to ban weather warfare "before it is too late" and advancing technology makes it "a terrifying weapon."

Some U.S. scientists, MacDonald disclosed, already have had informal talks with Evgeny Fedorov, co-chairman of the U.S.-Soviet Environmental Commission, and Yuri Zhukov of Pravda. They agreed, MacDonald said, that "this is an area of disarmament that invites attention."

MacDonald is the first former official under either President Nixon or President Johnson to state flatly that U.S. forces ever tried to use weather as a weapon. He cited as evidence a passage on 1966-67 "Laos Operations" in the Pentagon papers. It described an experimental "Operation Pop Eye" which "successfully" made rain to bog down the Ho Chi Minh Trail.

A federation press release carried the alleged weather war history into the Nixon years. It cited "widespread and often authoritative" newspaper and other reports indicating that operational weather war followed and noted that former Defense Secretary Melvin R. Laird denied only such acts over Vietnam, refused to comment about Indochina generally.

Last Sept. 8, the federation noted, a commercial weather modification firm — Weather Engineering Corp. — filed a suit for \$95 million, claiming that the government from 1967

through 1972 used a cloud-seeding device called "Weathercord" in Indochina in violation of the firm's patent rights.

Both Scoville and MacDonald denied personal knowledge of such activity, though both were in strategic jobs in some war years — Scoville as deputy director of the Central Intelligence Agency under Presidents Eisenhower and Kennedy, then assistant director of the Arms Control and Disarmament Agency under Presidents Kennedy and Johnson; MacDonald as an Institute for Defense Analyses official from 1966 to 1968.

As a member of Mr. Nixon's environmental commission MacDonald reported, he and others explored "the whole issue" and possible international control with National Security Council and Office of Science and Technology staff members.

"The general feeling," he said, "was that we did not know enough about the techniques" yet for international control. But now, said the federation, MacDonald and another 750 signers of a petition to the President, control is urgent before military rain-making becomes military steering of storms, manipulation of climates and inducing of earthquakes.

Sen. Claiborne Pell (D-R.I.) and 18 colleagues are sponsoring a resolution urging an anti-weather war treaty.