

# 'U.S. Diplomats in Vietnam Said to Face Moral Issue

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WASHINGTON, Dec. 29—Assignments to Vietnam—particularly to the pacification programs there—have caused many young career diplomats to face a serious "moral dilemma," according to an article in the December issue of the Foreign Service Journal.

The critical question, the article says, is how far they should go in exposing incidents "which they knew to be wrong."

One Foreign Service officer, now back from Vietnam and on his way to another overseas assignment, is reported by the article to possess a file of "documented atrocities, including photographs."

"He has written extensive reports on these apparent war crimes he investigated in Vietnam," the article states. "As far as he knows, no action has ever been taken to punish the guilty," it says.

The article, which is entitled "Vietnamization of the Foreign Service," goes on to say that the owner of the file will not make his information public because he is a "supporter of the President's Vietnam policy and fears the effect on that policy of additional war crime controversy."

He is also "aware of the negative result disclosure would have on his career prospects," the article states.

### Press Reports Cited

State Department sources said that the alleged atrocities were investigated by the department and were also reported in the United States press on Jan. 12, 1970. They are said to have concerned the South Korean "Tiger" Division, one of two South Korean infantry divisions serving in Vietnam, and not United States forces.

A State Department spokesman said that "implications in the article that United States forces were involved or that there was a cover-up by the State Department are just plain inaccurate and misleading."

A Pentagon spokesman said that officers in its Southeast Asian section had not been able to obtain the current issue of the Foreign Service Journal and thus could not comment.

"When we're given the facts," a Pentagon spokesman said, "we always look into atrocity charges."

The magazine article is signed with the name "John Claymore," a pseudonym, the journal explains, for a former diplomat who served in Vietnam and whose primary reason for subsequently resigning from the Foreign Service was "disagreement with United States policy on Southeast Asia."

Congressional and diplomatic sources have identified the author as John D. Marks, who served in the pacification program in Vietnam from 1966 to 1968 and later resigned to become a foreign policy consultant to Congress. Mr. Marks has confirmed his authorship.

The Foreign Service Journal

has a circulation of approximately 10,000 copies throughout the executive branch and in Congress. It is published monthly by the American Foreign Service Association, a voluntary group comprising approximately 8,000 active and retired Foreign Service personnel.

The article notes that nearly 3 million Americans have now served in Vietnam, including career diplomats, or approximately 20 per cent of the Foreign Service.

Approximately 350 — the great majority of them junior officers—have been assigned to the pacification program, known as Civil Operations and Revolutionary Development Support, or CORDS. They have functioned as advisers to the South Vietnamese civilian and military administration — trying, the article says, to make the Government of South Vietnam "a viable force in the countryside."

### Generation Gap 'Sharpened'

Service in Vietnam, the article says, is a unique experience. In no other country have perhaps 20 per cent of the foreign service officers experimented with soft drugs, but "that is the case in Vietnam," it asserts.

"And in no other country," it adds, "do foreign service officers have their own personal automatic weapons and receive training in how to fire a grenade-launcher before they go."

The article says that the Vietnam experience has "sharpened the generation gap" between young and older diplomats. The younger officers, it says, often returned disillusioned with what they regard as deliberate suppression by senior officers of criticism either of the Vietnamese authorities or of the United States military.

The political section of the huge United States Embassy in Saigon is especially subject to criticism on these grounds, the article asserts.

"Almost all foreign service officers who served in the pacification programs and most junior members of the embassy staff itself give examples of how their reporting was distorted and suppressed in Saigon in order that the embassy might be consistent with the prevailing 'line' in dispatches to Washington," the writer declares.

### Combat Experience

"Statistics they knew to be merely worthless were constantly being quoted by the President of the United States as an indication that progress was being made in Vietnam," it says.

Other points made in the article included these:

While there was no clear State Department policy, most Foreign Service officers in the field were expected to bear arms. Many participated in combat operations and even called in air strikes or artillery fire on enemy positions;

The State Department de-

cided during President Lyndon B. Johnson's second term that it must contribute 150 diplomats to the approximately 1,000 United States personnel—military as well as aid, intelligence and other civilians—in the CORDS program. Its policy of making duty in the pacification program mandatory for junior officers split the Foreign Service until it was scrapped last August. Now as the United States presence in Vietnam is reduced, only volunteers who have previously served in at least one other diplomatic post are being sent.

A few Foreign Service officers have resigned as a result

of disagreement with the Vietnam war, but "they are definitely the exception and in each known case they have been very junior officers."

The article maintains that, despite the difficulties in recruiting Foreign Service personnel for Vietnam, "the majority enjoy the experience once they go."

Living conditions often are pleasant and, the article says, they find "the country and especially the women fascinating."

When these officers are assigned elsewhere, it states, "the return to a more traditional Foreign Service assignment is often a letdown."