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U.S. CARGOES KEEP SAIGON FIELD BUSY

Airlift of Material Is Called
One of War's Largest
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SAIGON, South Vietnam, Nov. 16—No. 59397, a four-engine C-141 jet cargo plane of the Air Force's 63d Military Airlift Wing rolled to a stop on the tarmac at Tansonnhut Air Base at 10:42 A.M. after a 3-hour 40-minute flight from Kadena Air Base on Okinawa.

The hatch below the tail swung down. Side flaps opened. Maj. Darrel D. Shinn, 33 years old, the plane's commander, stepped out of the crew door. "General cargo, replacements," he said.

On the pallets that rolled out of the innards of the plane were truck and jeep fenders, five-gallon cans of insecticide powder, radio parts and cases of rifle-bore cleaner—all rather pedestrian war material.

Speed-Up Followed Visit

The Air Force began speeding up deliveries of supplies to air bases at Saigon, Bienhoa and Danang on Oct. 24, the day after Henry A. Kissinger left Saigon after conferring with President Nguyen Van Thieu on a peace settlement. The airlift has been called one of the largest of the war, but Air Force officials say it is smaller than peak shipments when Americans were at top strength here.

Under the peace proposals, all American military men would have to leave within 60 days. Weapons, thereafter, could be replaced only on a one-for-one basis.

"The time-compression factor is important," said Col. John B. Voss, chief spokesman for the Seventh Air Force. Deliveries have increased roughly tenfold since just before Mr. Kissinger's visit, but in September and early October, supplies were virtually a dribble.

Ground Force Is Reduced

More than half the handlers of ground cargo at the three bases had been sent home, and the remaining ground crews, and some handlers brought temporarily, are now working overtime.

In the last three weeks they have unloaded about 50 C-5 cargo jets, about 200 C-142's and about 50 Pan American, Flying Tiger and World Airways jets on Deefnse Department contracts.

In addition, about 30 C-130 cargo planes were flown into Vietnam by Air Reserve and National Guard pilots. These pilots returned home immediately and the planes were turned over to the South Vietnamese Air Force.

Training of Vietnamese

Senior United States Air Force officials said that South Vietnamese pilots could be trained to fly and maintain the craft in two or three weeks. American maintenance men working at Tansonnhut said that civilians working for Lockheed had already arrived to do the training; Air Force spokesmen would neither confirm nor deny this.

The timetable has been speeded up for deliveries of other airplanes—A-1, A-37 and F-5 fighter-bombers, AC-119 gunships and EC-47 electronic spotter planes, along with helicopters.

While the bulk of normal resupply has been handled by Navy ships, the Air Force has sped deliveries of some helicopters, armored personnel carriers and light weapons.

Navy shipments since Mr. Kissinger left have been routine and United States command spokesmen say they are unaware of any quick loading and departure of more ships than usual from the United States.

In late October, deliveries into Tansonnhut by Air Force transports reached a peak of more than 1,300 tons of cargo. Now, about five planes arrive every day, averaging 200 to 300 tons.

U.S. Using Training Flights

The current inventory of all South Vietnamese military hardware provided by the United States includes, throughout the Vietnamization program, 1,500 artillery pieces, 400 tanks, more than 1,000 armored personnel carriers, 60,000 field radios and 750,000 M-16 rifles. Most of this equipment was delivered by the Navy before the speed-up began three weeks ago.

Part of the reason for increased deliveries by air is that Air Force training flights, normally conducted throughout the Pacific region, can now be put to more effective use.

Training flights into Vietnam, whether the cargo is jeep fenders or helicopters, are considered more "realistic" than routine runs from Travis Air Force Base. Also, crews of the planes, like Major Shinn and the six trainees with him, can draw combat pay for the day they spend flying in and out of Vietnam. Stopovers are usually for fewer than two hours.