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**Vast Aid From U.S. Backs  
Saigon in Continuing War**

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Special to The New York Times

SAIGON, South Vietnam, Feb. 16—Ray Harris of Ponca City, Okla., has come back to Vietnam. This time he is not behind the machine gun of an Army helicopter but behind a workbench at the Bien Hoa air base, sitting next to South Vietnamese Air Force men and repairing jet fighter engines.

Mr. Harris is a civilian now, safer and better paid. But his changed role in the continuing Vietnam war has scarcely diminished his importance, for as a 27-year-old jet-engine mechanic he remains as vital to the South Vietnamese military as he was in 1966 as a 19-year-old helicopter gunner.

He is among 2,800 American civilians without whose skills South Vietnam's most

sophisticated weapons would fall into disrepair. Employed by private companies under contract to the United States Defense Department, these men constitute one facet of a vast program of American military aid that continues to set the course of the war more than a year after the signing of the Paris peace agreements and the final withdrawal of American troops.

Whether the United States is breaking the letter of the agreements could probably be argued either way. But certainly the aid directly supports South Vietnamese violations and so breaks the spirit of the accords.

The United States, far from phasing out its military in-

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involvement in South Vietnam, has descended from a peak of warfare to a high plateau of substantial support, dispatching not only huge quantities of weapons and ammunition but also large numbers of American citizens who have become integral parts of the South Vietnamese supply, transport and intelligence systems.

These include not just the Vietnam-based mechanics and technicians but also the Pentagon-based generals who tour airfields to ascertain the needs of the South Vietnamese Air Force, the "liaison men" who reportedly give military advice from time to time, the civilian Defense Department employes who make two-to-three-week visits to provide highly specialized technical help, and the Central Intelligence Agency officials who continue to advise South Vietnam's national police on intelligence matters.

The total budgeted cost of military aid to South Vietnam is \$813-million in this fiscal year, and the Pentagon has asked Congress for \$1.45-billion next year, with most of the increase probably going for ammunition, which the South Vietnamese forces have expended at a high rate.

**True Cost Even Higher**

The true costs of the military support probably rise considerably above the official figures. Some of the aid, for example, comes in through economic programs that dump millions in cash into the Saigon Government's defense budget. And other costs—salaries of Pentagon technicians who make special visits, for example—are hidden in the vast budgets of the United States Air Force, Army and Navy and are not labeled "Vietnam."

These valuable military goods and services have a sharp political impact. They are indispensable to the South Vietnamese Government's policy of resistance to any accommodation with the Communists. Militarily, the extensive aid has enabled President Nguyen Van Thieu to take the offensive at times, launching intensive attacks with artillery and jet fighters against Vietcong-held territory.

Furthermore, the American-financed military shield has provided Mr. Thieu with the muscle to forestall a political settlement. He has rejected the Paris agreements' provision for general elections, in which the Communists would be given access to the press, permission to run candidates and freedom to rally support openly and without interference from the police.

**Vietcong Maintain Pressure**

Mr. Thieu has offered elections, but without the freedoms. The Vietcong, refusing to participate unless the freedoms are guaranteed, have maintained military pressure throughout the country, mostly with artillery and rocket attacks on Government outposts and, from time to time, with devastating ground assaults against Government-held positions.

United States intelligence officials contend that continuing American aerial reconnaissance, as well as prisoner interrogation and radio monitoring, shows that the North Vietnamese have sent thousands of troops and hundreds of tanks and artillery pieces south in violation of the Paris agreements. They have also refurbished a dozen captured airfields and built a large network of roads that threatened to cut South Vietnam in two.

Yet in battle the Communists appear more frugal with ammunition than the Government troops, who have been seen recently by Western correspondents spraying artillery across wide areas under Vietcong control as if there was no end to the supply of shells. This difference has bolstered the view of some diplomats that China and the Soviet Union, unwilling to support an all-out offensive now, have placed limits on the rate of resupply to Hanoi.

Amid the political stalemate then, the inconclusive war continues.

**Keeping Jets in the Air**

Ray Harris is at his workbench in the huge engine shop at the Bien Hoa air base just north of Saigon. He works for General Electric, which manufactures the jet engine that drives the Northrop F-5 fighter, the mainstay of Saigon's air force.

He hunches over a circular fuser assembly, the last part of the engine before the afterburner. The assembly is invisibly cracked, and Mr. Harris is using a machine about the size of a dentist's drill to grind down the metal so the crack can be welded.

There are Americans everywhere in the shop, which is devoted to repairing and overhauling fighter and helicopter engines. There is virtually no workroom or machine or assembly line where Americans are anything less than essential parts of the process. Although a few are training Vietnamese to take over the work eventually, most are simply doing the work, especially the highly technical jobs, themselves.

The line where rebuilt jet engines are finally assembled, for example, looks more like a factory somewhere in the

United States than a shop belonging to the Vietnamese Air Force. Eight or 10 Americans work on several engines, and not a Vietnamese is in sight.

There are 25 Vietnamese assigned here, a technician says with a shrug, but he adds, "I never see them."

**Output Is Kept High**

Ken Martin of G.E. is crouching with another American beside a jet engine that he has just assembled himself in four 12-hour days. Without the American technicians, he says, the shop could produce no more than 40 per cent of what it does. Another American, asked what would happen if he and his colleagues pulled out, replied, "This would turn into a big Honda repair shop."

As self-serving and exaggerated as these assessments seem, they underscore the long-term military role that American civilians will have to play if the South Vietnamese are to have continued use of their complex weapons.

Without long training, mechanics in any modern air force probably could not match the skills of the American technicians, most of whom are not young Vietnam war veterans like Mr. Harris but seasoned experts who have been building and rebuilding engines for years on bases here and in the United States.

"Most of our people—this is the only work they've ever done," said Glenn Miller, the 47-year-old G.E. supervisor at the shop. Mr. Miller has 22 years' experience with the company, all on jet engines.

His men are so vital that they—and those working on helicopters for Lycoming Aircraft—were all placed on 12-hour shifts last month during the week before Tet, the Lunar New Year holiday. Their objective was to get as many aircraft flying as possible, Mr. Miller explained, to be ready for any Communist offensive.

### \$1,000 in a Long Week

Mr. Miller figures that with overtime and other bonuses, some of the men made \$1,000 apiece that week.

High pay is cited by many of the civilians as the main reason for their choice of Vietnam as a place of work. After a year on the job G.E. employees get double their base salaries, bringing the average pay to \$20,000 or more, plus \$16 a day for food and lodging—an annual total in excess of \$25,000.

Since living costs are low by American standards, and since the employees do not have to pay any Federal income tax on \$20,000 a year if they are off American soil for at least 18 months, many say they save a good deal of money. Some add that the money has become a silent source of resentment among the Vietnamese Air Force men, who earn only \$10 to \$35 a month.

This, plus profound war-weariness, has made many Vietnamese men difficult to teach, the contractors say. "They are only kids, all of them—they don't want to be in the military to begin with," said Elmer Adams, a former United States Air Force man who works for Lycoming supervising helicopter repairs.

"It's a lack of desire," said a technician for Cessna Aircraft working at the Da Nang air base. "They've been under so much pressure for so long they just want peace. They're peace-minded."

### Criticism of Americans

It was said sympathetically, and the Cessna man went on: "All they know is that Americans came over here and tore up their country, uprooted their villages and now they're looking for food."

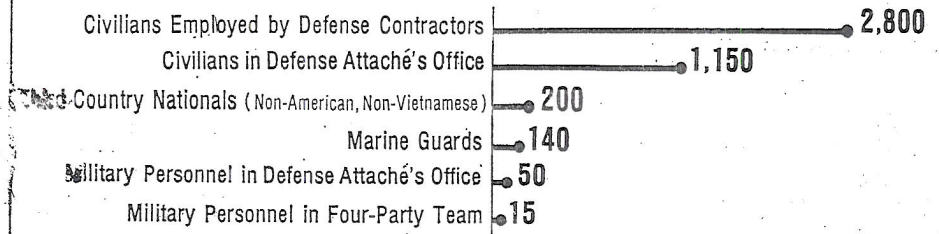
Gilbert Walker, another technician, who asked that his company not be identified, observed: "The people I talk to in town care very little about the form of government they have. I guess I don't feel much difference. I don't feel too much admiration for the present Government."

In that case, he was asked, why is he helping the South Vietnamese carry on the war? "I work for my company and I try to keep the aircraft flying," he replied. "I'm working on helicopters, that's all I know. Sometimes I sit back and think, What's it all for, what's the good of it all? It seems like an exercise in futility, what I'm doing."

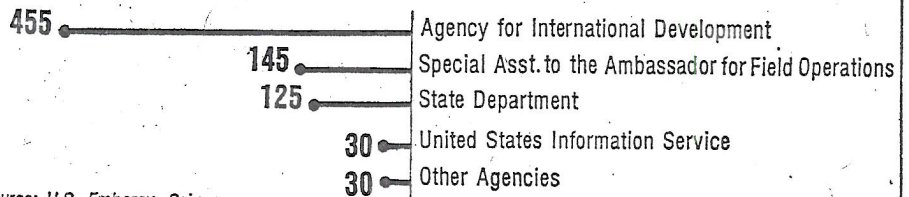
Futile or not, the Americans' work has carried some of them to positions of considerable authority in the South Vietnamese military supply system. The South Vietnamese still call many of them "co van," which means "advisers," and the American office at the Da Nang base has a big sign over the door that reads, "Co Van."

The Americans often come to identify closely with their jobs, perhaps taking more responsibility than their contracts call for. In a revealing slip of the tongue, Mr. Adams of Lycoming looked around the Bien Hoa engine shop and remarked, "We're in the process—they're in the process, rather—of reorganizing the shop."

### Military-Related Jobs Total: 4,155



### Civilian Jobs Total: 785



Source: U.S. Embassy, Saigon

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Photograph by Nguyen Ngoc Luong

### Many Still on Payroll

The fact is that supply and transportation have remained an American operation. "We Vietnamized the fighting, but we never Vietnamized logistics," said a Defense Department official based in Saigon.

That is reportedly the principal reason the United States Defense Attaché's Office—originally scheduled to be dismantled early this year—still contains about 1,150 people, of whom 50 are military men, according to official figures.

In addition, the reduction in the number of Americans working for private defense contractors has halted, allowing the figure to level off at approximately 2,800, down 2,200 since July, according to a spokesman for the Defense Attaché's office.

The logistics effort—provision of maintenance, ammunition, weapons, trucks, fuel, electronics parts and the like—is now the basis for the Americans' most pervasive and intimate contacts with the South Vietnamese military. Depending on how such terms as "military" and "advisers" are defined, there is evidence that the contacts occasionally cross into areas of relationship prohibited by the Paris agreements.

"The United States will not continue its military involvement or intervene in the internal affairs of South Vietnam," Article 4 of the cease-fire agreement declares.

### 'Total Withdrawal'

Article 5 says: "Within 60 days of the signing of this agreement, there will be a total withdrawal from South Vietnam of troops, military advisers and military personnel including technical military personnel and military personnel associated with the pacification program, armaments, munitions and war material of the United States and those of the other foreign countries mentioned in Article 3(a). Advisers from the above-mentioned countries to all paramilitary organizations and the police force will also be withdrawn within the same period of time."

According to both American and South Vietnamese officials, the American civilians—both employees of private companies and those of the Defense Department—who help with supply activities not only see that the South Vietnamese get the equipment and ammunition they ask for but also advise them on what to ask for.

Some of these activities came to light as a result of the capture by the Chinese last month of a former United States Army Special Forces captain, Gerald E. Kosh, who was aboard a South Vietnamese naval vessel during a two-day battle with Chinese forces in the Paracel Islands, in the South China Sea.

Mr. Kosh, who was taken prisoner and later released,

was described by a spokesman for the United States Embassy as a "liaison officer" with the South Vietnamese military whose job was to observe the efficiency of various army, navy and air force units and report to the Pentagon.

American officials steadfastly refused to provide further details of Mr. Kosh's job. They would not say exactly what he was supposed to observe or whether his reports were ultimately shared with the South Vietnamese. They did say that there were 12 such liaison men based in various parts of Vietnam.

#### Extent of Role Unclear

What is not clear is whether they confine their observations to such matters as the condition of equipment and the rate of ammunition expenditure, or whether they evaluate military tactics and strategies and go so far as to suggest alternatives.

What is fairly certain is that their reports end up in the hands of the South Vietnamese, perhaps providing indirect advice of one sort or another.

A South Vietnamese officer in a position to know said recently that normal procedure called for an American and a South Vietnamese to make an inspection or auditing tour of a military unit together. Then they write up their reports, sometimes separately, sometimes together. The reports, he said, are forwarded up the chain of command in the United States Defense Attaché's Office, which then relays copies of them to Lieut. Gen. Dong Van Khuyen, head of the Logistic Command for the South Vietnamese Joint General Staff.

More direct, overt advice is sometimes given by zealous Americans who are still stationed in every province. An embassy official reported recently that an American based in one province boasted to him about a successful military operation: "I told them to clear the Communists out of there."

Actually, South Vietnamese military men do not seem anxious for such guidance, noting with some pain that their country has suffered for years under American advice. What they want from the United States is military aid.

#### Six Generals Pay a Visit

Clearly, the Pentagon continues to attach high priority to the success of the South Vietnamese military. Last fall a group of six Air Force generals based in the Pentagon visited the Da Nang air base to find out what equipment and aid were needed, according to the base commander, Lieut. Col. Nguyen Tan Dinh. He said they were scheduled to come again this month.

A few weeks ago two civilian employees of the Air Force—one based in Hawaii and the other in Texas—were flown to Vietnam for a short stay so they could give advice on the repair and upkeep of plants that manufacture oxygen for jet fighters. One said he had been in and out of Vietnam

frequently on similar missions since 1964, the other since 1968.

Although the Paris agreements explicitly rule out advisers to the police force, the South Vietnamese National Police continue to receive regular advice from Americans.

In a recent conversation with this correspondent, two high-ranking officers said they and their staffs met frequently with the Saigon station chief of the C.I.A. and his staff. Sometimes, they said, the C.I.A. chief asks the police to gather intelligence for him, and often they meet to help each other analyze the data collected.

A police official confirmed that in some provinces "American liaison men" who work with the police remain on the job. "There are still some, but not so many," he said.

#### Episode in Police Station

Local policemen still refer to "American police advisers," according to James M. Markham, Saigon bureau chief of The New York Times, who was detained by the police late in January after a visit to a Vietcong-held area.

Mr. Markham said that in both Qui Nhon, where he was held overnight, and Phan Thiet, where he was detained briefly while being transferred to Saigon, policemen, talking among themselves, referred to the "police adviser." In Phan Thiet, he reported, a policeman was overheard saying, "Let's get the American police adviser over here."

In the last six weeks The New York Times has made repeated attempts to interview officials in the United States Agency for International Development who are responsible for American aid to the police. Although the officials appeared ready to discuss the subject, they were ordered by the United States Ambassador, Graham A. Martin, to say nothing.

In the absence of official United States figures, the best source for information comes from Senator Edward M. Kennedy, who calculated that as of last June 30 the Agency for International Development and the Defense Department has spent \$131.7-million over the years for police and prisons in South Vietnam. Despite a Congressional ban on such assistance enacted last December, such support has continued, according to American officials, but they say that no decision has yet been made on how to phase out the programs.

Section 112 of the new foreign aid bill reads: "None of the funds appropriated or made available pursuant to this act and no local currencies generated as a result of assistance furnished under this act may be used for the support of police or prison construction and administration within South Vietnam, for training, including computer training, of South Vietnamese with respect to police, criminal or prison matters, or for computers, or computer parts for use for South Vietnam with respect to police, criminal or prison matters."

#### Training in Washington

South Vietnamese policemen are reportedly still being trained at the International Police Academy in Washington, and technical contracts with private companies that provide computer services and communication equipment have not been terminated.

Senator Kennedy reported that the Nixon Administration had requested \$869,000 for the current fiscal year for police computer training, \$256,000 for direct training of policemen, \$1.5-million for police communications and \$8.8-million for police equipment, presumably weapons and ammunition, from the Defense Department.

Although these figures are not normally included in the totals for military aid, the police here have military functions, and engage in infiltration, arrest, interrogation and torture of Communists and political dissidents.

This activity violates the cease-fire agreement, which states in Article 11: "Immediately after the cease-fire, the two South Vietnamese parties will . . . prohibit all acts of reprisal and discrimination against individuals or organizations that have collaborated with one side or the other, insure . . . freedom of organization, freedom of political activities, freedom of belief."

#### Interviews Are Refused

Not only has Ambassador Martin ordered American officials to remain silent on the subjects of military and police aid; both he and the Defense

Attaché, Maj. Gen. John E. Murray, refused requests by The New York Times for interviews. Furthermore, the embassy told at least two private companies — Lear - Siegler, which employs a large force of aircraft mechanics here, and Computer Science Corporation, which works on military and police computer systems — to say nothing publicly about their work, according to company executives.

The official nervousness is attributed by an embassy employee to the Nixon Administration's apprehension about the inclination of Congress to cut aid to South Vietnam. The Ambassador has reportedly told several non-Government visitors recently that South Vietnam is in a crucial period and that he sees his role as unyielding support to build up and preserve a non-Communist regime.

He is reported to have pressed Washington to provide new weapons for Saigon to counteract the infiltration of troops, tanks and artillery from North Vietnam since the cease-fire. For example, plans have been made for the delivery of F-5E fighter planes to replace the slower, less maneuverable and less heavily armed F-5's, many of which were rushed to South Vietnam in the weeks before the cease-fire.

#### Violation Is Charged

Privately, officers in the International Commission of Control and Supervision scoff at the American contention that supply of the planes does not violate the Paris agreements, which permit only one-for-one replacement of weapons "of the same characteristics and properties." A high-ranking official of one of the non-Communist delegations, asked recently if he thought the United States was faithfully observing the one-for-one rule, replied, "Of course not."

There is nothing the commission can do about it without permission from both the South Vietnamese Government and the Vietcong to investigate, and permission is unlikely to be forthcoming from the Saigon side. Similarly, the commission has been unable to audit other incoming weapons and ammunition for both sides. During the first year after the cease-fire, the United States provided South Vietnam with \$5.4-million worth of ammunition a week, apparently unaccompanied by pressure to restrain military activities.

Several weeks ago Elbridge Durbrow, who was Ambassador to South Vietnam from 1957 to 1961, came to Saigon and met with Ambassador Martin and General Murray. Mr. Durbrow, who denounced the Paris agreements and who declares, "I am a domino-theory man," was asked by newsmen whether the American officials had indicated that they were trying to keep South Vietnam from violating the cease-fire.

"Not from anybody did we hear that," he replied. Then, referring to General Murray, he said: "He's not that kind of man at all—just the opposite. If you are not going to defend yourself you might as well give up and let Hanoi take over."