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Vietnam Hearing

The Terrible Toll Among Civilians

Washington

Nearly a third of South Vietnam's 17.5 million civilians have been injured or made homeless by the war, the chief of the United States pacification program told a Senate subcommittee yesterday.

U.S. Vietnam veterans who opposed the war stood in the aisles, occasionally expressing disagreement, as Ambassador William E. Colby testified that the number of refugees and casualties have been dramatically reduced in the last year.

AGREE

The veterans, some wearing fatigue jackets bearing Vietnam decorations, greeted portions of Colby's testimony with such remarks as "that's a lot of bull." Senator Edward M. Kennedy (Dem-Mass), the subcommittee chairman, cautioned them repeatedly to retain order.

Colby agreed with Kennedy that some attempts to resettle millions of dislodged civilians have resulted in what both called "disastrous failure."

Colby testified that since the beginning of the war more than 5.8 million South Vietnamese civilians have either been war casualties or been forced to move from their homes.

Colby said some South Vietnamese fit into both categories, refugees and casualties.

DEATHS

Kennedy said the subcommittee has information indicating that at least 325,000 South Vietnam noncombatants have been killed in the war since 1965.

He was critical of such U.S. military tactics as "free fire zones," "reconnaissance by fire," and heavy use of air power bombing raids.

He released a survey he said was recently taken in 96 Laotian villages by the U.S. military in which 97 per cent of the people said they had seen a bombing attack, 61 per cent said they had seen a person killed by a bombing, 75 per cent said their own homes had been damaged by bombing and 23 per cent said they thought bombing was directed at civilian targets.

EXTENT

Kennedy, listing the extent of war casualties, said:

"Each day escalates the human cost for all involved . . . and with each additional loss, we should be reminded that we cannot allow the spectre of a highly dubious 'bloodbath' of the future to blind us from the 'bloodbath' that is going on today — every day — in Vietnam and Indochina.

"This 'bloodbath' started long ago — and we are part

of it — and it will continue as long as the war continues, so long as efforts to end the war are avoided and delayed."

Associated Press