

# 48 American Civilians in Vietnam Charge U.S.

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SAIGON, South Vietnam, Dec. 28 — A group of American civilian volunteers in Vietnam charged today, in letters to President Nixon and Secretary General Thant, that United States actions in Indochina violated the Geneva Convention and other international treaties on the conduct of the war and the treatment of prisoners.

The letter to President Nixon charged that "The U. S. violations have in many cases been matters of policy made and espoused at the highest levels of the United States Government."

The letter to Mr. Thant said that North Vietnam should allow International Red Cross inspection of the prisons holding allied prisoners.

American teachers, community development workers, social workers, doctors, teachers, physical therapists, missionary teachers, agriculturalists and

nurses in Vietnam were among the signers of the two letters.

The names of the voluntary agencies for which they work were not given since, according to a spokesman for the group, "we are acting as individuals."

The contents of the letters differed. Nearly all 48 signers are Americans in Vietnam with working on social welfare and development projects. A copy of the letter sent to Mr. Thant was enclosed with the letter to President Nixon.

In the letter to the Secretary General, examples were given to substantiate claims that the United States had violated Article 3 among others, of the Geneva Convention of Aug. 12, 1949. It prohibits "outrages upon personal dignity, in particular humiliating and degrading treatment."

The letter said that the Joint United States Public Affairs Office—the agency concerned with psychological warfare in the United States Mission in

Vietnam distributed pictures of prisoners who were put on display.

The letter said:

"Article 13 of the Geneva Convention relative to the treatment of prisoners of war states: 'Prisoners of war at all times be protected, particularly against acts of violence or intimidations and against insults and public curiosity.'"

Calling for an end to "continued flagrant violations of the various international declarations and conventions on the conduct of war and respect for human rights," the letter to Mr. Thant also mentioned Article 19 of the Geneva Convention for the Amelioration of the Conditions of the Wounded and Sick in Armed Forces in the Field, of Aug. 12, 1949. It states: "Fixed establishments and mobile medical units of the Medical Service may in no circumstances be attacked, but shall at all times be respected and protected by the Parties to the Conflict"

The five-page letter then quotes the remarks of Vice President Agnew in a television show, "Face the Nation," on May 3, 1970, when Mr. Agnew reportedly said: "The purpose of the strikes into the sanctuaries is not to go into Cambodia but to take and reduce these supply depots, the hospital complexes."

Charges that the United States and the South Vietnamese have sprayed over 100 million pounds of herbicide chemicals over South Vietnam, destroying over half a million acres and forcing thousands of families to leave their land, were also made in the letter to Mr. Thant.

According to the letter, this violates Article 23 of The Hague Convention IV, which states that it is "especially forbidden to employ poison or poison weapons."

It was also charged that such acts by the United States violate Article 50 of the Hague

## Violates Treaties

Convention IV, which states "no general penalty, pecuniary or otherwise, shall be inflicted upon the population on account of the acts of individuals for which they cannot be regarded as jointly and severally responsible."

The violations applied to the people of Laos and Cambodia, as well as Vietnam, both letters indicated.

In calling for corrective measures, the signers of the letter to Mr. Thant asked that the allies should cease operations aimed at destroying hospitals and medical supplies and that the United States should end "saturation bombings."