

# Saigon Increasing Vigilance in Cities

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SAIGON, South Vietnam, Oct. 29 — Government policemen have been combing the streets and neighborhoods of Saigon and other large cities for the last two weeks, checking identification cards and enforcing new regulations that South Vietnamese citizens must possess a national flag and produce it on demand.

There appear to have been several hundred arrests nationwide in this latest campaign of vigilance in preparation for a possible cease-fire — no precise information was available — and American officials said the drive would be intensified in the next few days. Those seized have included suspected Communist agents and liaison men, but many have been arrested on suspicion only.

Since martial law was declared in South Vietnam last spring, in response to the North Vietnamese offensive, the police have been arresting people suspected of being Communists or Communist supporters. Several thousand have been seized but many of them have been released after interrogation.

There have been many substantiated reports of torture and mistreatment of prisoners in South Vietnamese jails over the last few years, but few reports of outright killing, the subject of rumors here recently. Representatives here of the American Friends Service Committee, which has kept a close watch on South Vietnamese prison conditions, said today that they had not heard of any recent murders in South Vietnamese prisons.

Rumors of executions appear to be based on a broadcast over the North Vietnamese radio on Oct. 19. A communique

## Hundreds Believed Held as the Police Enforce New Regulations

was read that date at a news conference in Hanoi by Nguyen Phu Soai, head of a special representation of the Communist organization in the South.

The communique said, "Over the last period the Nixon Administration and its Nguyen Van Thieu stooges have feverishly carried out long-existing schemes and 'national policy' which consists of intensifying

the killing and liquidation, by the cruelest means, of our combatants and patriots illegally arrested, tortured and detained by them."

The communique cited an incident in the Phuquoc penitentiary on the island of the same name on Oct. 11. News reports from Saigon a few days later said that four prisoners of war had been killed and 14 others had escaped in a melee with South Vietnamese military police guards.

A military spokesman said the incident occurred when prisoners who had been taken into the jungle to cut wood tried to jump the guards and take their weapons.

The communique broadcast over the Hanoi radio said that this report was to "cover up" the deliberate killing of the prisoners.

Newsmen are not normally allowed inside South Vietnamese jails, and no spokesman for the Government could be found to comment today. But an informed American official said: "It just isn't so that there is any deliberate killing of prisoners. No one has been executed in this country as far as I know since 1968."

There are believed to be somewhat more than 36,000 prisoners of war held by the South Vietnamese, of whom only a quarter are North Vietnamese.