

The Cost to Keep Thieu in Power



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AN ASTONISHING 90 per cent of the cost of keeping South Vietnam's President Nguyen Van Thieu in power for the past four years has been picked up by the U.S. taxpayers, according to an unpublished study. What's more, there's no indication that the burden will be any lighter in 1973 despite the end of the war.

The grim statistics have been put together from official figures by the Indochina Resource Center, a private research group which has been keeping close watch on Vietnam, Laos and Cambodia.

The 90 per cent figure, according to the Center, is the actual measure of U.S. support, not the amount shown in South Vietnam's budget. In 1972, for instance, South Vietnam reported revenue of about \$450 million. But the Center claims \$310 million of this was generated by the U.S. presence in Vietnam through import and currency subsidies, taxes on U.S. activities and other charges.

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IN OTHER WORDS, South Vietnam raised only \$140 million for its own support. Against this pittance, the U.S. taxpayers spent a staggering \$2.6 billion in South Vietnam. In a study still in draft form, the Center asks: "Would the American people wish to pay \$2.5 billion to support the government of Brazil . . . each year? Would we support 10 foreign governments at such a level? Then why is any single one worth this investment?"

The administration is "deceiving the Congress," charges the draft report, "into funding an indefinite and uncontrollable

presence that will continue the impossible dream of remaking Vietnam into a Western image."

Footnote: the administration disagrees with the 90 per cent figure and estimates U.S. support at 47 to 51 per cent of the cost of maintaining the Saigon regime. The estimates by the General Accounting Office have ranged to a high of 80 per cent.

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