

7,200 U.S. Civilians Manning New Headquarters in Saigon

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SAIGON, South Vietnam, March 29—The United States military mission in Vietnam has formally ended, but 7,200 civilian employees of the Department of Defense remain, most of them technicians helping the South Vietnamese armed forces.

The civilians are the responsibility of Maj. Gen. John E. Murray, the highest-ranking American military man remaining in South Vietnam, who has been designated the senior defense attaché.

The United States has organized some of the attachés under General Murray to handle the replacement of supplies and equipment to the South Vietnamese on a piece-by-piece basis as authorized by the Paris cease-fire accord.

Furthermore, the United States has decided to retain the heavily guarded combat operations center in the heart of its old headquarters building. It was from the center, with its glowing, illuminated charts and elaborate communications facilities, that the American war effort was directed.

Operations Room Renamed

The center, now called the readiness room, is being manned around the clock by a staff of about 40 civilians — mostly retired majors and lieutenant colonels — who will monitor military activity throughout South Vietnam.

They will be in constant touch with the United States' newly developed combat cen-

ter in Nakom Phanom, Thailand, where Gen. John Vogt, commander of the Seventh Air Force, who had been based here, has shifted his headquarters.

There are nearly 50,000 American servicemen in Thailand. Most are airmen either flying or supporting an armada of more than 450 B-52 heavy bombers. About 150 other B-52's are six hours away from South Vietnam on Guam, and there is at least one United States carrier with fighter-bombers offshore.

Nixon Warning Recalled

President Nixon issued a thinly veiled warning to the North Vietnamese two weeks ago concerning their possible plans for future military activity in South Vietnam, and these aircraft are clearly being kept ready to back up his words.

Pentagon officials estimate that the United States will spend about \$6-billion for military purposes in South Vietnam this year, in addition to the more than \$103-billion that has already gone into the country since the introduction of large American combat units in 1965.

The officials estimate that military spending will drop to a little more than \$2-billion next year.

In addition the United States Congress is expected to be asked for about \$500-million in economic aid for South Vietnam in the fiscal year beginning July 1.