

"Army" of  
Civilains  
In Viet  
  
Secret Yank  
Operations

SAIGON — (AP) — Thousands of U.S. civilians remain in Vietnam exercising military-related skills, their operations masked by official secrecy and confusion.

While official U.S. advisers are prohibited by the Paris accords, as far as can be determined - 6000 to 7000 American civilians, many recently in military service, are directly or indirectly supporting South Vietnam's million-man military machine.

Exactly how many there are and what they are doing are questions the civilian contractors refer to the U.S. Defense Attache Office, successor to the U.S. Military Command, which in turn says it doesn't know.

The bulk of the civilians are employed by a dozen major and more than 100 minor contractors.

Ostensibly their main job is teaching, mainly mechanical and electronic skills, but some are reported to be actually maintaining aircraft and communications gear.

About 800 are assigned to the Defense Attache Office, which has an allotment of 400 more civilians along with its 50 military personnel. It has taken over former U.S. Command headquarters at Tan Son Nhut Air Base at Saigon.

The command's old "war room" has become the "readiness room" and is no more accessible than it was

— From Page 1

before the military pullout. No details of what goes on inside are divulged.

The spokeswoman for the Defense Attache Office, Ann Bottorff, said the office's business includes overseeing the performance of contractors, eventually turning over contractor equipment — most of it formerly owned by the U.S. military — to the South Vietnamese, disposing of U.S. property, running the one-for-one replacement of war materiel allowed under the peace accords and developing Vietnamese self-sufficiency.

She acknowledged that some civilians will, in effect, be giving advice to the Vietnamese on military matters, but "in the technical assist-

ance sense, not in the adviser sense."

Defense Attache Office civilians "will not accompany combat forces into the field," Mrs. Bottorff said, and they will operate either at headquarters "or comparable places."

Turn To Page 4, Col. 7