

Saigon Gets Critically-Short U.S. Oil

By Jack Anderson

Despite the critical oil shortage at home, the United States is able to spare more than 20,000 barrels a day for South Vietnam. Each barrel contains 42 gallons.

The fuel shipments to Vietnam have dropped only moderately since U.S. forces pulled out. At the height of our B-52 raids last January, for example, the Pentagon shipped 995,000 barrels of oil to Saigon. This dropped to 681,000 barrels in August and nearly 600,000 barrels in September.

But these figures, the latest available, don't reveal the full extent of the drainage. For the U.S. supplies much of South Vietnam's civilian oil needs, too. These figures, apparently, are known only to the oil companies.

We have determined, however, that the Agency for International Development shells out \$80 million a year to purchase petroleum products for South Vietnam's civilians.

Of course, the bulk of U.S. oil shipments to Vietnam are used to fuel South Vietnam's war machine. At the height of our involvement in the Vietnam war, in 1969, we shipped nearly 44 million barrels to the Saigon regime. This figure dropped to 20 million barrels by 1972. During

the 1973 fiscal year, 12 million barrels were delivered for military use.

The U.S. government is still handling fuel procurement for South Vietnam's armed forces, letting contracts to U.S. companies. A Pentagon official told us that the amount of oil going to Vietnam hereafter will be determined by the scale of the fighting.

South Vietnam is bracing for a renewed offensive from the North. More than likely, it will take bigger oil shipments, literally siphoned from the gas tanks of American civilians, to keep the South Vietnamese tanks, trucks, ships and planes going.

FOOTNOTE: The civilian oil situation in Vietnam has become critical. Fuel was already rationed when a rocket attack wiped out 50 per cent of South Vietnam's civilian oil supply.

SECRET TAPES: Another set of secret tapes has turned up in the Watergate investigation. The prosecutors, however, don't know whether to believe what they have heard.

The tapes contain the monitored conversations of a banker, who boasted he handled a secret portfolio for President Nixon at Bebe Rebozo's Key Biscayne Bank.

The boast was made by Franklin DeBoer, who worked for awhile as vice president in

charge of the trust department at Rebozo's bank. A White House spokesman and a source close to Rebozo joined in denouncing the statement as completely false.

De Boer didn't know his words were being recorded as he talked freely on the phone and elsewhere about his banking business. We have now had access to the tapes.

"Substantial Salary"

"I happen to work for Mr. Rebozo, Mr. Abplanalp and Mr. Nixon," said DeBoer. (Robert Abplanalp is another of the President's rich friends.)

"You work for Mr. Nixon?" asked a friend.

"Yes . . .," said DeBoer. "I happen to draw a substantial salary outside the bank from them, which is obviously what all these —s are trying to prove, too."

The tape is slightly garbled at this point. DeBoer said either "he" or "we" run "the private portfolios for these people in the bank . . ."

"You know," he continued, "I have a salary that is substantially greater than the bank pays me from these people. I don't go out and (spit) in their faces."

"But you said in your testimony that you had no other income," remarked a friend.

"No other income that they

could find, okay?" said DeBoer. "Let me worry about my income, huh?"

At another point, he stressed again that he was sworn to secrecy. "When two people I'm directly involved with say this is the policy I wish to have adhered to," DeBoer saked, "what would you do? Go out there and say, '— thee, Nixon?'"

No Proof

The Watergate prosecutors have found no evidence which would verify DeBoer's remarks. A White House spokesman said that the President's detailed financial statement completely refutes the talk of a secret portfolio.

A source close to Rebozo declared firmly that "DeBoer never handled any portfolio for any of the three individuals outside or inside the bank."

State's attorney Richard Gerstein, meanwhile, has subpoenaed the records of the Key Biscayne Bank. He is known to be searching them for evidence of DeBoer's dealings.

FOOTNOTE: DeBoer was hired by the Key Biscayne Bank only a few months after the Securities and Exchange Commission had accused him of appropriating money of a public company for his own use and falsifying records. He has now been dismissed.

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